AGENDA ITEM IV: GENERAL DISCUSSIONS IN PLENARY SESSION

STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF HEALTH, REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA, AT THE SEVENTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

20-28 May 2019, Geneva, Switzerland

Excellencies, honorable Colleagues, distinguished delegates, Ladies and gentlemen.

May I first take this opportunity on behalf of the Government and People of the Republic of The Gambia to recognize the presence of the President of the Swiss Confederation in this August gathering and to have the honor to welcome the appointment of Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director-General of WHO.

Furthermore, I also wish to recognize WHO’s leadership in spearheading global efforts and action in support of Communicable and Non-communicable Disease (NCD) Prevention and Control; Public Health Emergencies- Preparedness and Response; Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Strengthening of Primary Health Care towards Universal Health Coverage as well as access, to safe, quality and affordable medicines and vaccines. In particular, we would like to thank WHO for preparing the ground and
supporting Member States through their respective Governments on Health, Environment and Climate Change in mitigation of their negative consequences on the quality of the lives of our people.

Under the leadership of His Excellency the President of The Republic of The Gambia Mr. Adama Barrow, renewed commitment and efforts have been made in making health as one of the priority sectors of his Government, and we are very pleased in his championing the course of women and children by establishing a new Ministry for women and children. Furthermore, I would like to highlight the giant strides he and his Government continue to make to reduce the high morbidity and mortality rates, especially among women, children and other vulnerable groups and the pursuits to reduce poverty.

Concrete measures have been taken in order to enhance value for money, sustainability and accountability in the health sector for reaching the objective of universal health coverage and to accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

We have laid out the path to universal health coverage, in particular establishing mechanisms to ensure equitable access to essential health services including social health insurance while ensuring effective safety nets to protect vulnerable individuals, households and communities.
My Ministry has developed and implemented an integrated non-communicable disease policy and strategic plan in collaboration with WHO and the West African Health Organization (WAHO), which is driven by health promotion principles and values. We have since established a functional Health Promotion Directorate in the Ministry of Health to reposition health promotion in line with the aspirations of the Global Health Promotion Strategy.

The Government of The Gambia faces a situation in which it is expected to finance a growing double-burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases, rationalize health service delivery, regulate the quality, improve equity in health care delivery and meet the growing demand for better health care.

The Gambia is aware that one of the innovative provisions adopted by WHO Member States in their revision of the International Health Regulations (IHR) is the obligation for all participating States to ensure that certain functional capacities are put in place, which include public health surveillance and capacity for public health actions at certain points of entry designated by the State and we therefore renew our commitments towards, regional and global initiatives and plans.

The Gambia has attained ever since MDG targets 4 for both infant and underfive mortality rates. However, despite the successes registered on our health indicators, we are still disturbed by the high rate of maternal
mortality which is unacceptable. The international community should do more in supporting developing countries in their scaling up efforts to reduce the number of women dying during child birth.

Finally, we support the WHO’s Global Health Priorities which were clearly articulated in the Director General’s address and like other Member States, The Gambia is committed to the proposed next steps in the implementation of the Global Health Action Plan.

I thank you for your kind attention.