

**SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF HEALTH
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
AT THE 76th WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY**

*Esteemed President,
Honorable Dr. Tedros,
Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is an honour and a great pleasure to participate in the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly. As we mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Organization, it provides a good momentum to reflect on the progress reached so far and the challenges in achieving its primary goal of saving lives and promoting health for all. As Member States, we have collectively faced significant challenges both at domestic and global levels in recent years. The support and coordination provided by the World Health Organization through these uneasy times have been invaluable in ensuring collective response to challenges.

We can now proudly state, as Dr. Tedros announced earlier this month, that COVID-19 no longer constitutes a public health emergency of international concern. I would like to acknowledge the significant efforts made by all of us in solidarity to make this achievement possible. We must, however, remain vigilant as many experts warn us of potential future challenges. Hence, we commend the efforts of all Member States and the WHO in drafting a convention, international agreement or another instrument for Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Health System Response. Armenia actively participates in this crucial process and anticipates the upcoming rounds of negotiations to formulate an instrument that will enable us to incorporate the lessons learned and to be better prepared for whatever challenge comes next.

With the pandemic gradually receding, we can now redirect our focus towards addressing the gaps and backslides in our healthcare systems. I am proud to share that Armenia is taking significant steps towards achieving Universal Health Coverage. The Government of Armenia has adopted the Concept Note on Comprehensive Health Insurance. We are looking forward to this critical reform as it serves as a foundation for other ongoing health system reforms such as Health Services' Quality Improvement, Primary Health Care Reform and digital transformation. In all of these initiatives, we highly value the support and invaluable expertise provided by the WHO as we strive to achieve health for all and save lives.

Dear colleagues,

I would like to take this opportunity to draw your attention to the ongoing challenges in our region, which pose a significant threat to the right to life and to the health of the affected population.

For six months from now, the safe and unimpeded passage of people and goods to and from Nagorno-Karabakh via the Lachin corridor remains blocked by Azerbaijan, resulting in total isolation of a population of 120,000. The ongoing blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh has caused a shortage of food, medicine and medical services.

Azerbaijan is deliberately politicizing and obstructing the safe and unimpeded humanitarian access of the United Nations agencies to Nagorno-Karabakh, in line with the humanitarian principles, thus depriving the people of Nagorno-Karabakh of the life-saving humanitarian assistance.

In light of these challenges, we attach utmost importance to a timely and strong response of the WHO in Nagorno-Karabakh in accordance with its mandate and Constitution, which clearly states that “the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition” and “the health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent on the fullest co-operation of individuals and States.”

In conclusion, I would like to wish every success to the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly.

Thank you