REGIONAL STATEMENT BY ZAMBIA ON AGENDA 15.1: INDEPENDENT OVERSIGHT AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR THE WHO HEALTH EMERGENCIES PROGRAMME

Thank you Chairperson, Zambia makes this statement on behalf of the 47 Member States of the Africa Region.

We commend the Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee for the detailed and insightful report.

As Member States of a Region with a significant number of actual and potential health emergencies, we echo the Committee’s acknowledgement of the work of the Secretariat, and its leadership in preparedness and response to health emergencies in our region and beyond. We also take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to the many staff and well-wishers who continue to put their lives at risk as they execute their duty for a safer and healthier world.

Chairperson, the importance of staff security and safety, particularly during health emergencies, cannot be overemphasized. We therefore strongly welcome and support the IOAC’s recommendation on the need for a strengthened and functional internal security apparatus within WHO to supplement the efforts of other United Nations Agencies with this mandate, and urge the Secretariat to actualize this as a matter of urgency.

The Africa Region wishes to propose that, going forward, mandatory training on sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse be one of the major selection criteria for external consultants to be deployed in response to health emergencies to ensure a more favorable working environment for all.

Chairperson, we share the IOAC’s concerns on the potential of the transformation agenda to disrupt existing emergency response systems during the transitional period as capacities move out of the WHE Programme and into centralized WHO structures; and wish to get more information from the Secretariat on the measures that have been put in place to minimize this risk.
The Africa Region commends Secretariat for advocating for political support and mobilizing various resources for enhanced capacity to rapidly deploy surge personnel to respond to the Ebola virus disease outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We further acknowledge the contribution of the Secretariat as well as our own local scientists in the research and development program particularly towards the Ebola virus vaccine, that has been a game changer in the fight against the Ebola Virus.

We welcome the recommendation on the need for more investment in epidemic preparedness, and therefore appeal to the Secretariat to prioritize the recommendation of the IOAC to lead the engagement with our political leadership and continue pressing for Member States to increase domestic resources for this cause.

Lastly, we appeal to the Secretariat to ensure harmonization of efforts with all major players to avoid duplication which usually characterizes the response to health emergencies, and lead in unnecessary waste of resources.

I thank you.