STATEMENT BY THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA ON AGENDA ITEM 15.2: WHO’S WORK IN HEALTH EMERGENCIES

Chairperson, thank you for giving Zambia this opportunity to take the floor on behalf of the 47 Africa Region Member States. The Africa Region welcomes the report on WHO’s work in health emergencies.

We acknowledge the progress made and commend WHO for responding to 51 graded emergencies in more than 40 countries and also having recorded 14 new graded emergencies during the period January to October, 2019. We also commend WHO for the management of emergencies through the WHO Incident Management System because it has allowed for the rapid establishment of structures at country, regional and headquarters levels as well as supported the quick release of funds within 24 hours through the WHO Contingency Fund for Emergencies. This has translated into a reduction of time taken to control outbreaks especially in the Africa Region from an average of 418 days in 2016 to 51 days in 2018.

Our region continues to experience the majority of the WHO higher-graded public health emergencies, thus, WHO must continue to support the strengthening of capacity of member states and also continue to provide resources for emergency preparedness and responses.

Chairperson, our region notes that the quest to deliver quality health services during health emergencies especially in the Africa region continues to be hindered by limited funding, humanitarian and human resource capacities, mass population movements during such crises and on-going insecurities. There is need for WHO to engage leadership in countries, the Africa Union and all major relevant stakeholders so that control and containment of health emergencies in challenging environments can be achieved.

The Africa region recognizes that a health system cannot be delinked from health security. It is therefore commendable that over 100 Joint External Evaluations have been completed so far and that through the WHO
Emergencies Programme the first annual report of the Global Preparedness Monitoring Board was launched at the United Nations General Assembly in 2019.

In order to improve collaboration among Member states and build stronger International Health Regulations (2005) capacities, it is imperative that all member states, with support from secretariat, continue to conduct cross-border simulation exercises as well as national bridging workshops for human-animal health interface. Our region also looks forward to the roll-out of the Epidemic Intelligence from Open Sources (EIOS) initiative in line with the integrated disease surveillance and response as this will enhance early detection of all hazards that have the potential to become acute public health events. Finally, the Africa region notes the report and urges Secretariat to strengthen partner collaboration particularly in our region in order to have improved outcomes of health emergency responses. I thank you.