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DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF KOREA**

(Dr Kang Ha Guk) Fifth plenary meeting, 19 May

Agenda item 3: Address by Dr Margaret Chan, Director-General

Dr Kang Ha Guk (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea):

Mr President, at the outset on behalf of DPRK delegation let me extend my warm congratulation to you on your election as the chairperson of the 68th WHA and I hope that under your presidency the WHA will delivery fruitful results.

Mr Chairman, WHO has identified “Building resilient health systems” as the theme of the general discussions in the plenary meetings of the World Health Assembly and I think it is of great significance in facilitating health development of countries aimed at protecting and promoting the health of people. This is an important issue, especially in view of the current reality when natural disasters such as flood, typhoon, tsunami etc. frequently occur with an increase of the existing diseases and the emergence of the new diseases due to climate change, and when communicable diseases are spreading on a regional and international scale affecting human health and life without being confined to a particular country due to globalization and increased travel.

This can be verified by the emergency health situation created by the outbreak of SARS, avian influenza, new influenza and most recently the outbreak of Ebola virus disease in West Africa at the beginning of last year, which spread to several regions and countries of the world with serious impact on health and socio economic life of the people.

The delegation of the DPRD recognizes that the selection of “Building resilient health system” as the theme of the general discussions in the plenary meetings of the current WHA is most timely and accordingly would like to express our support to it.

We also would like to place on record our appreciation to WHO for their active efforts to successfully respond to the public health emergency caused by the outbreak of Ebola virus disease around the world which began from last year and is continuing until now.

Mr Chairman, One of the important lessons learned in the control of the EVD outbreak which started in West Africa is the importance of building and strengthening resilient health system as a major public health work, the principle objective of which is to protect and promote life and health of the people.

The government of DPRD has established a long time ago a people oriented socialist health care system based on universal access to free health care and preventive care, and has vigorously pursued a strategy of fully displaying the superiority of the socialist health system by strengthening national health system and infrastructures as one of the consistent health policies.

Thanks to the benevolent politics of the respected Comrade **Kim Jong Un**, the first chairman of the National Defense Committee of DPRK which is centred on a lofty love for the people the national commitment and investment in health is increasing and various modern health facilities such as Breast Cancer Institute of Pyongyang Maternity Hospital, Okryu Children's Hospital, Ryugyong Dental Hospital, Munsu Functional Rehabilitation Center etc. have been constructed making substantial contribution towards improvement of health condition of the people.

In order to strengthen national preparedness and response capacity during the outbreak of communicable diseases during flood and other communicable diseases transmitted by imported virus such as measles and to ensure the prevention of communicable diseases from being transmitted into the country the government of DPRK is directing its focus of attention to strengthening health care institutions and hygiene and anti epidemic institutions at various levels and to the provision of medicines, consumables and other medical supplies to these institutions to build up their response capacity in emergency health situation.

In addition a national plan for emergency preparedness and response is formulated and regularly updated, and a National Emergency Anti Epidemic Committee comprising Cabinet, MoPH, people's committees, health care and anti epidemic institutions at various levels and other related agencies is established to provide supervision, monitoring and oversight of the implementation of the plan.

Countries are the units for the implementation of the activities for prevention and control of diseases and mortality of EVD is highest in those countries with vulnerable health systems and weak health infrastructures. This provides a compelling evidence that countries should have ownership and take responsibility in carrying out efforts to build up the resilience of the health system.

Without the efforts of individual countries to strengthen their health systems and national capacity the international support alone is quite less than enough to ensure the early and successful control of communicable diseases which are occurring with increasing frequency and intensity across the world and to achieve the universal coverage of primary health care.

All efforts of WHO in supporting countries in the fight against diseases including communicable diseases should be geared to strengthen country capacity to achieve self reliance, especially in the areas of strengthening infrastructures for hygiene and anti epidemic work and service delivery and to strengthen health system capacity to respond to all types of public health emergencies.

By doing so WHO should fulfill its mandate and obligation to member states as the one and the only international health agency responsible for global health.

Our delegation would like to take this opportunity to extend our appreciation to WHO and other international agencies for their sincere support to the health sector of our country.

The government of DPRK will continue to stand committed to work in close collaboration with WHO in strengthening our national health system and improving our work to protect life and health of the people.

Thank You.