

**Speech by the Brazilian Minister of Health,
Luiz Henrique Mandetta, at the Opening of the
Plenary Session of the World Health Assembly**

Tuesday, May 21, 2019 – 9:30 a.m.

5 minutes Brazil + 5 minutes BRICS

BRAZIL – 5 MINUTES

Mr. Chair of the 72nd World Health Assembly, Mr. Director-General of the World Health Organisation Dr. Tedros Adhanom, Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great pleasure that I begin my international activities, as Minister of Health, at an event that is so important for health as this World Assembly. I assure you that I am deeply honoured and eager to seize this opportunity in order to improve the health of our populations.

Initially, I wish to offer public thanks for the cooperation of each Member State here, as well as the support provided by the WHO Secretariat during the period when Brazil chaired the Executive Council. Thank you very much indeed.

Dear Colleagues, we are facing many challenges.

I have just taken up the reins of one of the world's largest government health systems, with the commitment to ensure access to health of quality and in an efficient way. I thus acknowledge that

it is not by chance that our countries have been gradually ranking universal health coverage as a priority, together with the WHO.

I believe that universal health coverage is the best way for us to achieve much-desired access to health systems and services all over the world, focused on the population.

The reappearance of diseases that can be prevented by immunisation is a threat to everyone. Today's young parents are sadly unaware of the devastating effects of diseases such as polio, rubella and measles.

In the current context of huge streams of people in constant movement, we – as managers – are being forced to reinvent ourselves. There is an urgent need for us to focus on integrating health surveillance and healthcare actions. Once again, I stress the need to buttress Primary Healthcare as the cornerstone of our systems, strengthening our commitments to the Declaration of Astana while extending vaccine coverage activities.

I am firmly convinced that vaccine coverage is the path that unites us. Brazil thus calls upon everyone to promote national vaccination actions aligned with global targets.

Brazil's commitment in this field is the *Movimento Vacina Brasil* – a nationwide vaccination drive encompassing a set of integrated actions involving government entities and private companies, underscoring the importance of vaccination as a public health

measure while constantly heightening awareness among the population in general.

At the same time, in the spirit of leaving no-one behind, we are firmly engaged in addressing neglected diseases and their social determinants, in parallel to a commitment focused on responding to rare diseases. These two groups of diseases are challenging us to find alternatives that ensure access to early diagnoses and treatments, while at the same time urging us to expand our capacities for dialogue with the pharmaceutical industry, in order to ensure fairer prices for medicines and supplies.

Finally, I cannot fail to underscore the relevance of the discussion exploring sustainable financing for health systems and the need for coordination between Health and Finance authorities of our countries. Confident that this collaboration will help fine-tune government outlays on health, I am firmly committed to building up institutional capabilities that will ensure efficient management and guaranteed access to health for everyone.

Thank you very much.

BRICS – 5 MINUTES

Mr Chair of the 72nd World Health Assembly, Mr Director-General of the World Health Organisation Dr. Tedros Adhanom, Ministers, Heads of Delegations, Ladies and Gentlemen

Speaking on behalf of the current Brazilian Presidency of the BRICS Group, it is a matter of great satisfaction to see this Group growing stronger year by year, in the global health context. This progress is crucial for us all to surmount the challenges that we face together in delivering good-quality healthcare services to our citizens: more than 2.9 billion of them.

We are well aware that Universal Healthcare Coverage is a priority for this Organisation, together with all the BRICS countries. Thus, aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 3, we strengthen our commitment to ensuring a top-quality healthcare system that is fair, comprehensive and sustainable. Some 3.6 million people are believed to die each year all over the world, due to lack of access to healthcare facilities – which could be avoided through sufficient financing for our healthcare systems. This issue is a matter of top priority for the BRICS countries. We will leave no-one behind.

I also stress the importance of effective actions that spur healthy growth and development for children, particularly during early childhood, which is another priority for the BRICS Group.

Breastfeeding and access to breastmilk could help save the lives of some 4.6 million babies who die before reaching their first birthday. This is why the BRICS countries will be organising a workshop on this issue in the course of this year, heightening awareness of the importance of access to breastmilk in national policies, while also strengthening channels of communication among BRICS institutions that provide breastmilk bank facilities.

Another issue of much concern to us is low vaccine coverage rates. Keenly aware of the importance and urgency of boosting vaccine coverage rates worldwide, we are alert to the fact that paths will soon open up for disseminating diseases, unless countries boost their vaccination levels. In this context, access to vaccines is a vital step towards wider coverage. This is why it is a priority for the BRICS Group, particularly in terms of extending access to vaccines and deploying strategies designed to reverse worldwide underproduction of these vital medications.

Still looking at guaranteed access to vaccines and medications, I stress that this discussion must necessarily involve issues such as cost and price transparency; buttressing regulatory systems that underpin quality, safety and efficacy; and particularly investments in research and development activities that respond to public health needs, such as medications for transmitted and neglected diseases whose production is limited worldwide.

Finally, I must mention the BRICS Tuberculosis Research Network, which has been taking increasingly impressive strides ahead in

dealing with this disease in the countries of this Group, which account for more than 40% of the global TB burden in terms of the number of cases and deaths. The only way to reach the Sustainable Development Goal for TB is through effective actions undertaken in the BRICS countries, which means fine-tuning our TB research agenda and streamlining interactions among our countries. This is why more centralised support is needed, synergetic and well organised in order to foster collaboration among researchers and agencies. Thus, backed by the Global TB Programme run by the World Health Organisation, the BRICS countries propose that a TB Network Secretariat be set up, headquartered at the WHO in Geneva. We believe that this is the best way of ensuring the sustainability of our TB Network and its ongoing activities.

Thank you