



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

STATEMENT BY THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA ON AGENDA ITEM 1.3 – ADDRESS BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL.

Mr. President, Honorable Ministers, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Zambia has not been spared by the COVID-19 Pandemic and recorded 753 confirmed cases with 7 deaths as of 17 May 2020. What started with imported cases on 18 March 2020, has now led to local person to person transmission, with increased geographic spread being fueled by cross boarder movements, particularly of truck drivers and crew.

The Zambian Government continues to attach great importance to health and as part of its transformational agenda has put in place various strategic plans and frameworks to ensure Universal Health Coverage across the continuum of health care using a primary health care approach. Pursuant to the transformational agenda in all our Ministerial structures, we have placed Public Health Security as a priority under the Health Sector and this is enshrined in our Vision 2030 as well as the 7th National Development Plan 2017-2021. Health security remains a key pillar to shield the population from disease outbreaks and public health threats. Our country has developed a multisectoral COVID-19 Contingency and Response Plan which informs resource mobilisation and action. We have embraced the global standards to the response focused on Surveillance, case management, diagnostics, IPC and RCCE.

The Zambian Government further constituted an emergency fund to the response which catalyzed the initial procurement of essential commodities including personal protective equipment. In addition, we have received unprecedented support from various local and international stakeholders and partners, including the One UN System and the Africa Union.

Mr President, the Global COVID-19 pandemic presents a multi-dimensional set of challenges for member states, with different impacts on the different continents and countries. Thus, a sustained comprehensive, collaborative, multi-lateral approach is required if COVID19 is to be contained and mitigated. The shortages of essential commodities that have been noted across the globe have the potential to undermine an effective response. Zambia, like many other LMICs, struggle to secure even limited consignment of commodities due to the difference in price structures by manufacturers for different regions. This has been exacerbated by a lack of policies to prevent both current and future shortages if existing new technologies are found to be effective in addressing covid19. We look forward to this being instituted based on the provisions of the TRIPS agreement and flexibilities of the DOHA declaration coupled with expedited regional pooled resources and procurement to

ensure equitable and affordable access to new technologies. It is in this regard that Zambia co-sponsored the COVID19 Response resolution and fully supports its adoption by this assembly.

Further, we have noted that the current diagnostic platforms are mostly time consuming, complex, costly and laboratory based. We urge secretariat to accelerate the emerging pipeline of rapid tests and support the development of adapted, accurate diagnostic tests that can be used widely in LMICs including promotion of local manufacturing while assuring quality. This also calls for increased support and investment to local research and development to inform decision making.

Mr President, allow me, as a representative of the Zambian Government which hosts the Africa CDC Southern Africa Regional Collaborating Centre to call upon member states in the region and beyond to participate in collective responsibility to the response, continuously offering solidarity to one another. If we are to win this fight, we need to adhere to the agreements on border management and other measures in line with the International Health Regulations (2005) made among us.

As I conclude, I wish to emphasise the importance of ensuring continued investment in the delivery of other public health programs and services that focus on other communicable and non-communicable diseases; maternal, child, adolescent health and nutrition. Mr. President, even amidst COVID-19, we should not lose focus on the universal health coverage goal.

I thank you.