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73rd World Health Assembly (Resumed)
Committee B

Bangladesh Statement on Item 18
Date: 09 November 2020

Mr. Chair,

First of all, I congratulate you on your appointment as the Chair of Committee B.

02. We thank the Director-General for his report on the progress towards the finalization and implementation of the measurement of the results framework for the Thirteenth General Programme of Work (GPW), 2019–2023. We attach high importance to realizing the triple billion targets as envisioned in the Thirteenth GPW.

03. We take note of the outcome of the pilot exercise and are fully convinced about the need for strengthening data and health information systems in the countries for the meaningful implementation of the GPW. The COVID-19 has also shown us the importance of reinforcing data and health information systems for preparedness, prevention, detection, and response to a pandemic. We are concerned that there are considerable data gaps related to health-related SDGs across the countries. WHO should enhance its support for the countries in need in identifying and addressing those gaps as a priority and help the countries produce reliable, timely, affordable, country-owned, accessible, and disaggregated data.

04. About the Financing and implementation of the Programme budget 2020–2021, we would like to thank WHO for its large-scale emergency operations to fight the pandemic.

Mr. Chair,

05. The road to achieving the SDG3 and its important target on Universal Health Coverage should involve a critical balance in embracing digital innovation and investment in the new health economy. We fully understand, if managed properly, digital innovation has the power to accelerate health equity by making health systems stronger, more affordable, more resilient, and more effective. In this respect, we value the importance of the proposed Global Strategy on Digital Health.

06. The current COVID-19 situation has also testified to the importance of investment in research and innovation as well as equitable access to vaccines. We strongly feel the necessity of securing needs-driven health research and development related to diseases that continue to disproportionately affect developing countries. Promoting technology transfer and local production of medical products would also be the key in this regard.

07. The Government of Bangladesh has embarked on a journey to transform the country into a 'Digital Bangladesh'. It includes a number of digital health initiatives with the vision of "Quality healthcare services to doorsteps of all citizens". We have already developed a draft Digital Health Strategy 2021 -2026 in accordance with the digital health building blocks, recommended by WHO and the International Telecommunication Union. Taking account of ongoing COVID experience, the Strategy also focuses on the role of digital health to tackle pandemic. We are also using 'SDG tracker' - a web-based platform - to better track the progress of the SDGs, including the goal 3.

08. We further underscore the need for appropriate resource allocation and funding by the WHO for the implementation of the Global Strategy on Digital Health. We must not forget that there is a pressing urgency to invest in efforts to overcome the major impediments that developing countries face in engaging with and accessing new digital health technologies.

09. I thank you.
