

**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY ZIMBABWE UNDER AGENDA ITEMS
13.1, 13.2 AND 14 (COVID RELATED ITEMS) DURING THE VIRTUAL
SESSION OF THE RESUMED SEVENTY-THIRD WORLD HEALTH
ASSEMBLY (WHA73): 9 - 14 NOVEMBER 2020**

Madame President;

Director General;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Madam President, allow me to express our deepest sorrow over the devastation that all nations are suffering due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which is manifested through the tragic loss of lives, as well as the devastating toll on health systems and economies.

When we met in May 2020, Zimbabwe was at the beginning of its national response, with a handful of cases. Almost six months later, we are still faced with an ongoing epidemic, with an increased number of cases. In spite of the illegal unilateral sanctions imposed on the country, we continue to exert relentless efforts and deploy our limited resources to counter the disease, leveraging the guidance we receive from the WHO.

We have all been reminded of the need for strong, resilient and integrated health systems capable of fully implementing the International Health Regulations, and to be prepared for health-related emergencies. The imperative for economic development, especially in developing countries, improved health statuses as well as the tackling of the social and economic determinants of health have been brought to the fore.

Zimbabwe calls on all the ongoing evaluations to take into account the aforementioned and give greater attention to the building and strengthening of health infrastructure and systems, without leaving any group of countries

behind. We believe that for the most effective outcomes to be realised, a holistic and balanced approach must be used, one that does not entrench inequalities and favour selective approaches over scientific evidence and other regional peculiarities.

Over the years, the low investments in non-communicable diseases have been noted and this underfunded area has been hard hit by the pandemic, reminding us that we need to fully address all vulnerabilities in the global health architecture. The key lies in mobilising sustainable and flexible financial resources for all disease areas.

Madam President,

We wish to express our gratitude to WHO for its efforts in seeking a path for equitable distribution of COVID-19 products. We note that there remain disparities in access to these products. There are other long term issues that need to be addressed, including promoting local production, technology transfer, transparency and delinking of the cost of new research and development from the prices of medicines, vaccines and diagnostics.

We note the deep economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its long term effects. We therefore call on the international community to widen debt relief measures and economic bailout packages, to enable countries to transition from the pandemic to economic recovery and sustainable development.

In conclusion, we reiterate the relevance of the Development Agenda, the urgency of Universal Health Coverage and the central role of Primary Health Care, in this effort WHO can count on Zimbabwe's support.

I thank you.