Statement by Bangladesh

74th World Health Assembly

Agenda Item-3: General Discussion

Theme: "Ending this pandemic, preventing the next: building together a healthier, safer and a fairer world"

Mm. President,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

At the outset, I would like to thank WHO for convening the Health Assembly during this difficult time when the humanity is facing a grave health crisis. Our thoughts and prayers are with those who have lost their loved ones to COVID 19.

Today, we have a grim picture before our eyes: devastated economy, overwhelmed health system, record number of unemployed people, huge loss of lives, and so on. Each and every country is struggling, but it is a fact that countries are disproportionately affected. And hence, global efforts must consider such national circumstances.

Since the inception of the pandemic, Bangladesh responded with a "Whole-of-the-Government" approach under the able leadership of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and it took possible emergency measures in line with WHO's Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan.

Since launching of nationwide COVID-19 vaccination in February, within three months, over 5.8 million people have received the first dose and around 3.5 million have been fully vaccinated. However, there is a shortfall of around 2 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccines to cover the 2nd dose due to sudden

supply disruption and we need those on an urgent basis. We count on the COVAX Facility to help us overcome this unforeseen crisis, as we also expect to receive the supply of 20% of our total need committed already under this Facility.

Mm President,

The Government of Bangladesh is steadfast to ensure affordable and quality health services for its people and to attain the health-related SDGs including the universal health coverage target. Due to our pragmatic policies, we have been able to bring down child and maternal mortality rate significantly. We have taken primary health care to the reach of even rural people through community health clinic and other measures.

While national efforts are required to guarantee the wellbeing of the people, the global health system must be rebuilt to respond to global health crisis like the current one. We need a WHO which is strong, effective and fully equipped to provide leadership in fighting such calamities through coordinated and timely response. In this context, my delegation would like to highlight a few points:

First, the COVID-19 vaccines must be treated as 'global public good'. And vaccine hesitancy, nationalism and protectionism must be put aside for a just and equitable vaccine regime for all;

Second, production of vaccines, therapeutics, diagnostics and other medical equipment must be scaled up to meet the global demand through sharing of technology and technical know-how as well as providing compulsory/ voluntary licensing to help the pharmaceutical and other health-related industries across the world;

Third, provisions of the TRIPS Agreement must be waived temporarily to help the development, manufacturing and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and other tools to flight this public health crisis;

Fourth, mental health has been severely affected due to this prolonged pandemic justifying the necessity to integrate mental health services into health care system. We must strive to do so.

Finally, global, regional, and national targets should be set up to achieve the goals of Antimicrobial Resistance which is a significant public health concern, and which could aggravate during the times of pandemic.

I thank you, Chair.

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