REPUBLIC OF KENYA

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

STATEMENT FOR THE GENERAL DEBATE BY

HON. MUTAHI KAGWE, EGH CABINET SECRETARY FOR HEALTH

DURING THE 74TH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

24TH MAY TO 1ST JUNE, 2021

Your Excellency, Dechen Wangmo, the President of the 74th World Health Assembly;

Dr. Tedros, WHO Director General,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I start by congratulating her Excellency, Madam Wangmo on your election this morning as the President of this Assembly.

I am delighted to address this 74th World Health Assembly

being convened more than a year since the COVID-19 outbreak was designated by WHO as a pandemic.

I wish to commend Member States and WHO for their tireless efforts in suppressing transmission of the virus.. Into the future, we will need to enhance WHO's role even more for coordinated responses to similar or worse challenges.

Fellow Ministers, in order to bring an end to the current pandemic, I wish to Six immediate actions for us to consider:-

1. Address the issue of vaccine inequity as a matter of necessity in order to ensure access to COVID-19 vaccines for all. Appreciating the fact that none is safe until we are all safe must mean that to vaccinate generally safe 13-year-olds in one country while denying high-risk adults access to the vaccine in another country is a damning contradiction of this principle. There have been clear demonstrations of vaccine nationalism or vaccine apartheid. Such actions will not stop the virus.

2. To realise the full potential of our collective response to the virus, we welcome the recent announcement of additional vaccines to the COVAX facility. We hope that monies intended for the acquisition of AstraZeneca vaccine will be diverted to cater for the acquisition of the added vaccines and contribute to the budgetary relief of developing and middle income countries as earlier intended.

3. Step up regional and local manufacturing of vaccines by facilitating and fast tracking regulatory and prequalification for local production, especially in Africa in WHO processes.

4. Coordinate technology and knowledge transfer on new COVID-19 vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics in all parts of the world with WHO assistance.

5. Countries must desist from engaging in discriminatory conduct and accept all valid certificates for vaccines approved by WHO for emergency use.

6. Ensure the sharing of Intellectual Property Rights with countries to allow for the development of local capacity in vaccine development. Consequently, there is a need to re-evaluate ownership of IP Rights to reflect the true participation in creating the same. Too often, research results and trials conducted in Africa are assumed to be the property of some participants instead of all participants.

In conclusion, we as a global community have a common goal of ending this pandemic. But we must do so in such a manner that we end it for everyone at the same time. Coordinated efforts by WHO will help all of us to mitigate against the next pandemic. We need to fight not just the virus but also another disease called vaccine nationalism which can stop us from building together a healthier, safer and fairer world.

I thank you.

SEN. MUTAHI KAGWE, EGH,
CABINET SECRETARY.