

# FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

## STATEMENT OF THE

## HONOURABLE MINISTER OF HEALTH,

## DR. E. OSAGIE EHANIRE, *MD, FWACS*

## AT THE

## 74TH SESSION OF THE
## WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

## MAY 24TH – 1ST JUNE, 2021

**Protocol**

**Your Excellencies**

**President of the 74th jWHA**

**DG WHO**

**Regional Directors**

**Delegates of the WHA**

**Distinguished Participants**

I bring you greetings and the best wishes of the Government and people of Nigeria.

The past 12 months have been daunting and are defined by the novel Sars-Cov-2 virus that challenged health systems and battered economies the world over. It also changed the way we live and do business, with World Health Assembly convening for the second time virtually. Millions of lives have been lost and many more sickened. With new surges of covid in some countries, others are anxious about protecting their citizens. The speed with which Covid-19 has spread round the

world demonstrates that it is a threat to mankind rather than to individual nations.

Nigeria has not been spared, but has perhaps faired better than some others so far, and by no means sees itself as free from the shadow of a new Covid-19 surge. Some experts have stated that it is a matter of when, not if, for many countries. Nigeria's government has preemptively activated social and public health measures and non-pharmaceutical and other interventions, to reduce risks.

Less than 2% in Africa has received vaccination and with just 4 million doses allocated to Nigeria and follow-up delivery uncertain, we opted to fully vaccinate about 2 million health workers and elderly of phase 1. By May 19th, 2021, 93.5% of available vaccines had been used and 2nd dose for the phase 1 would be given by July 9, 2021, when current stock expires. I thank partners and Governments, who kindly

supported from onset of Covid-19 outbreak till now. The Covid-19 pandemic still poses a threat to already struggling health systems. Another wave could be a calamity, if we do nothing. Vaccination must go on in all countries, but will stall soon in many, with a vaccine stock out. In our view, it is time to see the hand of friends of Africa and low and middle income countries, and I urge them to urgently release their surplus doses to Africa and poorer countries now, not just as giveaway of vaccines about to expire, or when moved by horror reports of a surge. Unfolding events elsewhere show clearly that vaccination is of value, only if given before a mass Covid-19 infection and not during, or after.

Nigeria happily received polio free certification on August 25 2020 with great relief. We are however, among countries still dealing with sporadic cases of circulating Vaccine Derived Polio Virus. Apart from strict surveillance, technical tools to

address it include routine polio and novel OPV Immunization. Allow me to stress that resilient primary healthcare systems are indispensable in the long-term for this and related purposes like Covid-19 and should be supported.

In the past five years, Nigeria invested heavily in national public health security with support of Partners, to align with the WHO emergency program areas. Country capacity is strengthened along the 13 thematic areas of International Health Regulations.

The Ministry of Health with the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control work with other Ministries, Department and Agencies to coordinate tracking and implementation of activities of the National Action Plan for Health Security.

With signs of donor fatigue and diminishing resources, Nigeria pledges to use allocations judiciously, but hereby expresses

interest in technical and material support from WHO and member states, to address gaps in our system.

Thank you for your attention.