STATEMENT BY HON. MINISTER OF HEALTH OF UGANDA, DR. JANE RUTH ACENG OCERO, AT THE 74TH WHA PLENARY GENERAL DISCUSSION (proposed word limit is 300- two and a half minutes of intervention)

The President of the 74th Session of the World Health Assembly

Excellences, Hon. Ministers of Health and Heads of Delegations

The Director General of the WHO

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Nagoya Protocol is a critical instrument for access, collaborative work and benefit-sharing for clinical data, specimens and genetic resources for pathogens of epidemic potential, and its implementation together with other related initiatives, specially the International Health Regulations, is of vital importance to global health.

Uganda ratified the National Environment (Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing) Regulations in 2005 and became a party to the Nagoya Protocol in October 2014. Since then, Uganda has ensured consistent streamlined access to genetic resources and sharing of benefits derived from genetic resources for scientific research, commercial purposes, bioprospecting, conservation and industrial application. In addition, sustainable management and utilization of genetic resources have been promoted.

Effective bio-surveillance and sharing of information including genetic sequence material, is vital for development of therapeutics, diagnostics, vaccines and treatments of infectious diseases.

The WHO African Region applauds WHO on implementing the recommendations of decision WHA 72 (13), and the support it avails to member states before, during and after epidemics. The unique situation COVID-19 has posed, calls for greater global collaboration and solidarity in planning and resource mobilization for response and innovation in use of genetic materials. We call on WHO to continue supporting the development of capacity for disease surveillance, diagnostics development, clinical management and response to public health emergencies. We thank the global scientific community for working around the clock to quickly develop the COVID-19 vaccine and China for quickly sharing data on the initial/original/first COVID-19 genome which enabled vaccine development to proceed faster. We await progress report on the WHO bio-repository, as we consider this to be critical to global bio-security.

WHO AFRO member states must continue implementation of the Nagoya Protocol and the International Health Regulations, as anything that slows or disrupts global collaborative efforts to prepare for and respond to epidemics is detrimental to our economies. The WHO African region thus welcomes the report of the Director General on the Nagoya Protocol implementation and urges member states to review and internalize the report and the on-going initiatives.

I thank you

Hon. Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng Ocero

Minister of Health

Republic of Uganda