



SOUTH SUDAN'S STATEMENT ON AGENDA ITEM 13.2: MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL CONNECTION

Madam Chair and the Distinguished Delegates,

South Sudan is honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the 47 member states of the WHO African region on agenda item 13.2 on Mental Health and Social Connection.

We commend and salute the Director General Dr. Tedros Adhanom and all member states for their resilience and commitment that led to the conclusion and adoption of the Pandemic Agreement after 3 years of intense negotiations during which South Sudan substantially participated.

In this context, we also thank the Director General and the Secretariat for the comprehensive report and acknowledge that, indeed, mental health which affects people worldwide and Africa in particular, regardless of age, background, or socioeconomic status, remains a significant threat that causes high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and substance abuse leading to stigmatization.

South Sudan, a post-conflict country that experienced years of wars, displacement, natural disasters, economic instability, and weak healthcare infrastructure is among those severely affected.

To address this phenomenon, we advocate that mental health, and social connection must be recognized as a cornerstone of resilience and recovery including the need for increased investment in mental health services as well as policies that foster social connection to promote psychological well-being.

Furthermore, mental health and social connection in our nascent continent be regarded a public health priority that demands urgent attention and integration into health plans and strategies by policymakers to foster a more supportive environment for individuals coping with trauma, stress, and psychological distress.

In conclusion, we call upon all relevant stakeholders to rally behind the above-mentioned recommendations and align their investments with the continent's priorities on mental health and psychosocial support using the globally available data for policy making and research on the impact of pandemic diseases such as COVID 19 on mental health.

Thank you, Chair