



Republic of the Gambia
Ministry of Health
The Quadrangle
Banjul

SEVENTY-NINTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

STATEMENT OF THE MINISTER, GENEVA 2026

Agenda Item: 12.2	Mental Health: Implementation of related resolutions and decisions
Documents	Document A79/5
Requested action	Note the report
Time limit:	2 Minutes
Commission	A

Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

The Gambia aligns itself with the statement delivered by Ethiopia on behalf of the WHO African Region and welcomes the Director-General's report on mental health.

The Gambia reaffirms its strong commitment to advancing mental health, brain health, and the prevention and treatment of substance-use disorders. We commend WHO's continued leadership, including implementation of the Global Alcohol Action Plan 2022–2030 through the SAFER initiative; the Intersectoral Global Action Plan on Epilepsy and Other Neurological Disorders; and strengthened collaboration with UNODC to expand access to evidence-based treatment for drug-use disorders.

In The Gambia and with support from the UN we are integrating mental health and psychosocial support into primary health care. Through the WHO Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP), we are training health workers—particularly Community Health Nurses within Village Health Services—to identify, manage, and refer priority mental, neurological, and substance-use conditions at the primary care level. Mental health and psychosocial support services are also being integrated into emergency response, especially in frontline facilities.

In October 2025, we launched the Gambia Mental Health Investment Case, which estimates the annual economic burden of selected mental health conditions and

suicide at approximately 768 million Gambian dalasi, equivalent to 0.5 percent of GDP, largely driven by productivity losses. The analysis demonstrates the strong social and economic returns of investing in community-based mental health interventions and has informed national planning and advocacy for increased domestic and partner financing.

We have also advanced reforms to our legal and policy framework. A new Mental Health Bill is at an advanced stage of enactment, while the Mental Health Policy 2025–2035 provides a roadmap for decentralized, community-based services.

The Gambia is strengthening mental health promotion from childhood through older age, including initial work on a National Dementia Plan.

The Gambia remains committed to ensuring that mental health services are rights-based, accessible, and available to all, including in emergency contexts.

We urge the Assembly to note the report.

Thank you