

Country statement at 76 WHA by Federal Minister for Health

WHO at 75; Saving lives, driving health for all”.

Tuesday 23, May 2023

Mr. President, Director General - WHO, Honourable Ministers, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, “Assalam-o-Alaikum” & a Good Morning / Evening

- **I stand here today with immense sense of responsibility and commitment towards improving the health outcomes of our people while building together a healthier, safer, and fairer world.**
- **In this regard, let me congratulate DG WHO and his remarkable team of experts and member states on the 75th anniversary of WHO. This anniversary signifies an important moment in global collaboration, when countries of the world came together and founded WHO, to promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable.**
- **This anniversary is a moment to unite the world again in tackling the health, development, and climate challenges of the future.**

Mr. President

- We appreciate and endorse the DG WHO report, which has outlined the key priorities to be focused upon within the health sector, that is, enhancing access to Universal Health Coverage, tackling Health Emergencies & ensuring Health & Wellbeing.
- We believe, that the recommendations of the report would be critical for reorienting health systems towards primary health care, as a resilient foundation for universal health coverage; protection from health emergencies; increasing access to quality drugs and diagnostics capacity; prevention and control of non-communicable diseases and mental health as well as focusing rehabilitation services.
- In order to achieve universal health coverage, the main outcome of SDG 3, by providing access to quality essential health services without financial hardship, Pakistan has signed the UHC-2030 Global Compact and has also endorsed the Salah Declaration on UHC. The country has also set itself a target to increase its UHC Service Coverage Index from 52 in 2022 to 65 by 2030.
- Pakistan has now moved towards implementation of its essential package of health services focusing on community and primary health care levels during 2023, with enhanced investments by the government while some of the financial gaps are filled by the development partners.

- **Considering the health workforce crises in Pakistan, the government has decided to increase the no of community-based lady health workers from 89,000 to 135,000 within 5 years.**
- **Pakistan considers Implementation of International Health Regulations as a priority agenda, to sustain essential public health functions, as we have faced a number of health emergencies such as Covid 19 pandemic, mpox, Polio, floods, earthquakes & heat waves to name few; which have challenged the preparedness level of our health systems & capacities of other sectors as well.**
- **Pakistan, while recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, had to shoulder massive flooding during 2022, displacing 30 million people, destroying crops, damaging health infrastructure and causing considerable loss of around US\$ 20 Billion. We highly appreciate the Global Community and especially Secretary General, United Nations General Assembly, for supporting Pakistan.**
- **In order to further strengthen IHR core capacities, the country with the support of WHO is undergoing 2nd round of Joint External Evaluation to identify the critical gaps and provide key recommendations for developing & implementing health security plan.**

Mr. President

- **We resolve to continue to work tirelessly, to improve the health and well-being of our people which would require a multi-sectoral approach & empowering the communities. In this regard addressing the social determinants of health, such as poverty, inequality, and discrimination, can have a significant impact on health outcomes.**
- **Government has initiated no of social protection schemes like Benazir Income Support Programme and Health Card to address poverty and inequality.**
- **The United Nations “Decade of Action on Nutrition” has given a new direction in global nutrition action: to eradicate hunger, and malnutrition in all its forms in order to avoid long-term consequences for the country's economic and social development.**

- **It is unfortunate, that we have significant burden of under 5 children who are stunted and anaemic, while the prevalence of overweight among children under five is also on the rise. Several nutrition programs are being implemented in the provinces, to address malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies.**
- **However, significant resources are required to address this immense challenge. Meanwhile, we have also been successful in getting the increase in duties and taxes as per WHO guidelines on sugar-sweetened beverages.**
- **With personal oversight and support from the honourable Prime Minister and myself as Federal Minister for Health, Pakistan will continue to make consistent progress towards stopping the transmission and eradication of Polio-virus. Only single Polio case has been reported so far in 2023, from a bordering district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.**
- **Special plan is being implemented in coordination and collaboration of district administration and security agencies in Southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, to ensure a safe working environment for the frontline Polio workers to reach all children under five. In addition, aggressive Polio vaccination campaign schedule is being implemented in the country.**

- **Close coordination with the Afghanistan Polio Program is being maintained for the vaccination of population on the move between two countries and the ones residing in bordering areas and settlements. We highly appreciate the continued support of global PEI Partners for supporting our eradication efforts.**
- **Pakistan is committed to bringing the state of the art in health innovation for its people. Pakistan is an early implementer of new MDR TB treatment BPAL recently recommended by WHO. We plan to roll it out nationwide**

Mr. President

- **In the end, let me thank DG WHO for inviting us to express our gratitude and appreciation to all excellences, the ministers of health, who are here, to jointly take decisions for saving lives and driving health for all. Through this forum we also urge the global community to come together and work towards making this world safer from emergencies, providing access to quality health services, and thereby, work towards health and wellbeing of the world population.**

Thank you, Mr. President