



**SPEECH DELIVERED BY HON.MAITHRIPALA SIRISENA, MINISTER OF
HEALTH, SRI LANKA AT THE
MINISTERS MEETING OF THE 66TH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY
20.5.2013 – 05.30 P.M. AT UN ASSEMBLY HALL. GATE 13/15**

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Dr. Margret Chan, Director General of World Health Organization
Other Distinguished Invitees,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege and pleasure to address this august gathering on the occasion of the sixty sixth world Health Assembly of the World Health Organization.

First and foremost as Chairman of the G 15 Group of Countries I present the Highlights of the Statement prepared by G-15 Group.

1. I have the honour and the great pleasure to deliver the summary of the Joint Statement on behalf of the Group of Fifteen (G-15), a Summit Level Group of Developing Countries comprising 17 member states¹. The fuller statement can be collected at the entrance of the Assembly Hall.

2. The Group has, time and again, emphasized that sound public health, besides being central to the Millennium Development Goals is also fundamental to socio-economic progress. Seeing that notable progress is being made in the health sector², we call for united global action as our most effective collective response to the daunting global health challenges that stares us in the face.

We urge the international community to continue its efforts in furthering the pace of progress on the health-related MDGs to give a boost to global partnerships for a fully

¹ Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Jamaica, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Venezuela and Zimbabwe

² Inspired by Para 37 – 14th G-15 Summit Statement

inclusive and equitable globalization and transformative, people-centric development. We are also of the view that the present health-related MDGs should remain central to the post-2015 development agenda³.

3.

We remain deeply concerned that the global burden and threat of non-communicable diseases constitutes one of the major challenges for national and global development. The health and socio-economic toll of non-communicable diseases is already impeding achievement of MDGs and will continue to pose one of the major development challenges in the 21st century.

While noting the progress since the 2011 High Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Non Communicable Diseases, the Group welcomes the development, by the WHO, of a Global Action Plan for the prevention and control of NCDs for 2013-2020 and a comprehensive global monitoring framework for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, and recommends its adoption at this Assembly.

4.

Recognizing the high incidence of communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and their impact on developing countries, the Group reiterates the need for appropriate international policy space to facilitate equitable access to affordable, quality, safe and efficacious medicines, including generics, immunization services, safe vaccines and advanced medical technologies for combating such diseases.

Influenza pandemics and the ensuing health emergencies also call for improved mitigation and management capacities, preparedness and timely response. Building stronger partnerships and promoting investments in developing core capacities and multi-sectoral emergency risk-management policies and plans remain crucial

6.

The Group reaffirms its conviction that health is a precondition for an outcome and an indicator of all three dimensions of sustainable development as embodied in “The Future We Want”⁴ at Rio+20. The Group calls for, inter alia, a coordinated approach to strengthen the capacity of health systems for monitoring and minimizing public health

³ Taken from the result of the meeting report of the High Level Dialogue on Health in the Post-2015

⁴ Para 138 – A/RES/66/288 – The Future We Want

impacts of climate change through adequate preventive measures, preparedness, timely management of natural and human-induced disasters.

7.

Last but not the least; the Group would like to record its appreciation for the commitment and tireless efforts of Dr. Chan and expresses its support for the ongoing reforms in the WHO and hopes that it will emerge renewed and stronger to be able to fulfill its constitutional mandate as the Global Health Authority.

Thank You.

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka, I would like to thank the World Health Organization and especially Dr. Margaret Chan, Director General for organizing this very important meeting which is considered as the highest global forum for improvement of health status of people living in all corners of this world.

We all are aware that the whole world is passing through turbulent times. **The demographic** transition is leading to challenges of ageing, a growing burden of non communicable diseases, and life style related diseases.

Therefore the World Health Organization as the leader in global health has a greater responsibility in overcoming difficulties faced by the health sector today.

The Government of Sri Lanka considers that it is the responsibility of the government to preserve the free health services and safeguard the rights of every citizen for comprehensive and quality healthcare services.

We have given high priority for communicable disease prevention using primary health care approach.

As under-nutrition among mothers and children below five years remains a challenge, the government of Sri Lanka has established a National Nutrition Council with His Excellency the President as the chair in order to involve all relevant ministries in addressing the issue of malnutrition.

We wish to inform the assembly that we have developed our Migration Health Policy which includes addressing the health of inbound, outbound and internal migrants. We are now not only a sending country but we also receive labor migrants , we urge other member states to review their stand on access to primary health care, safety and dignity of migrant communities which will be beneficial to all .

Ladies and gentlemen,

Proposed reduction in the program budget for 2014 – 2015 for the South East Asia Region is not justifiable considering facts that one fourth of the world’s population and one third of the global disease burden are confined to our region.

Therefore I earnestly request the Director General of World Health Organization to reconsider this decision for reduction of budget allocations to South East Asia Region at the next Executive Board Meeting.

I sincerely hope that your experience, combined wisdom and the recommendations of this meeting will effectively contribute and further strengthen our efforts towards a better health tomorrow.

Thank you.