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**Director General of the WHO says World Health Day 2018 will be celebrated in Sri Lanka**

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director General (DG) of the World Health Organization (WHO) announced today in Geneva during the 142<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Executive Board of the WHO that the World Health Day 2018 will be celebrated in Sri Lanka. This year's theme will be the Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

The DG congratulating Sri Lanka which celebrates the 70th Anniversary of its Independence next month, said "there is no more fitting place for this event, as you know, Sri Lanka has a long history of providing free healthcare for its people."

In response Minister of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine, Dr. Rajitha Senaratne, who is attending the WHO Executive Board as a Member, thanked the Director General of the WHO on the selection of Sri Lanka to celebrate this important event. He said Sri Lanka looks forward to welcoming Dr. Tedros and high-level officials of the WHO including the Regional Director, SEAR to this event.

During his intervention Minister further said "my country is considered by most experts as a low cost, high impact, model of health care in South East Asia and the world. It has eliminated malaria, filariasis and neonatal tetanus as public health problems. Good achievements in maternal and child health care, high life expectancy, and near universal child immunization coverage has also been achieved."

Dr. Senaratne highlighted the challenges countries like Sri Lanka face - namely fast aging populations, very high burden from NCDs, minimal and often inadequate elderly care packages and services and inequitable access to services for the disabled and vulnerable populations, and said that these services need to be strengthened.

Sri Lanka urged the DG/WHO to sustain strong political advocacy at global level for UHC and also to consider putting together a binding international convention on improving coverage, access, financial protection and quality of care in support of UHC.

The Sri Lanka delegation to the 142<sup>nd</sup> Executive Board of the WHO includes Sri Lanka's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva Ravinatha Aryasinha, Dr. Anil Jasinghe, Director General Health, Dr. Palitha Abeykoon, Chairman, National Authority

on Tobacco and Alcohol, Dr. Champika Wickramasinghe, Deputy Director General/Non-communicable Diseases, Dr. A.I. Jagoda, Director Health Information and Ms. Dulmini Dahanayake, Second Secretary of the Sri Lanka Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva.

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