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REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA

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Seventieth Session

Resumed virtual session, 24 November 2020

**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND POPULATION OF CONGO ON
THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE RESUMED SEVENTIETH
SESSION OF THE WHO REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA**

Honourable Ministers of Health of Member States of the World Health Organization African Region and dear colleagues;

The Director-General of the World Health Organization;

The World Health Organization Regional Director for Africa;

The Commissioner for Social Affairs of the African Union Commission;

Representatives of International Organizations and Development Partners;

Distinguished Delegates to the Seventieth session of the World Health Organization Regional Committee for Africa;

Distinguished guests, with due regard to precedence;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is once again a great privilege and pleasant duty for me to take the floor today, on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the resumed Seventieth session of the World Health Organization Regional Committee for Africa, which is being held once again in the context of the global health crisis marked by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its partners for successfully ending the terrible Ebola virus disease outbreak.

Thus, after the first part of our virtual Seventieth Regional Committee session held on 25 August 2020, we are meeting today for the second session which will essentially be devoted to two major events, namely:

- The World Health Organization Programme budget 2022–2023, and
- Lessons learnt from the management of COVID-19.

Allow me, in my capacity as Chairperson of the Seventieth session of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa, to express my sincere congratulations on the excellent quality of the preparations and deliberations of virtual global public health events held in the African Region.

I would also like to reiterate our congratulations to the Director-General of WHO, **Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus** on his efficient guidance on sustaining the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in our different Member States.

Likewise, we congratulate **Dr Matshidiso Moeti**, the WHO Regional Director for Africa, on the multifaceted support provided by the Regional Office through the WHO country offices for the management of the pandemic.

With regard to this second session, we would like to strengthen and deepen the reflection on the important points that emerged from our discussions during the special event on the COVID-19 response in August, namely:

- high-level political commitment;
- strengthening the framework of solidarity and collective leadership;
- sharing of information that is critical to the management of the pandemic, particularly at cross-border hubs;
- scaling up research into our traditional medicine products so they can be included among therapeutic products;
- strengthening the process and mechanisms for accessing the COVID-19 vaccine.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to underscore our reliance on WHO's support to our countries, and I am confident that this support will be strengthened, particularly as a result of the transformation process that the Organization has embarked upon.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Vice-Chairpersons and the Rapporteurs who have supported me in preparing for this resumed virtual session.

I would also like to thank the staff of WHO/AFRO, as well as all persons who have contributed to the preparation of this new virtual session, and I would like to express my gratitude to our technical and financial partners, the private health sector and civil society, as well as the national and international media present in our Member States.

In conclusion, I wish my fellow Ministers of Health of the African Region and all the delegates, every success as we resume our work.

I hereby declare open the resumed proceedings of the Seventieth virtual session of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa.

Thank you.