

REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA**ORIGINAL: ENGLISH**Seventy-fourth sessionBrazzaville, Republic of Congo, 26–30 August 2024**OPENING REMARKS BY HONOURABLE MINISTER OF HEALTH DR EDWIN
GODIRAONE DIKOLOTI**

Your Excellency, President of the Republic of the Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso,
Honourable Minister of Health and Population of the Republic of the Congo, Gilbert Mokoki,
Honourable Ministers of Health of the African Region and Heads of Delegation,
Director-General of WHO, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus,
WHO Regional Director for Africa, Dr Matshidiso Moeti,
Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development of the African Union, H.E.
Ambassador Minata Samaté Cessouma,
Representatives of the international organizations,
Distinguished Delegates,

A Very Good morning to All!

It is my pleasure to participate at the opening ceremony of the Seventy-fourth WHO Regional Committee for Africa. We are pleased indeed to be hosted in Brazzaville as the headquarters of the WHO Regional Office for Africa. First and foremost, allow me to appreciate the presence of **His Excellency Mr Denis Sassou Nguesso, President of the Republic of the Congo**.

I believe that this demonstrates the importance that His Excellency attaches to the purpose and objective of this meeting. **Honourable Minister of Health and Population of the Republic of the Congo, Mr Gilbert Mokoki**, I express my gratitude to you and your Team for affording us a hospitable and warm welcome to your country.

Since the Seventy-third session of the Regional Committee meeting which my country Botswana successfully hosted in August 2023, a lot of progress has been achieved in the Region with respect to policies and strategies which have advanced our pursuit of universal health coverage.

Member States, I congratulate you on the endorsement of the Fourteenth General Programme of Work (GPW 14) at this year's World Health Assembly, which promises to address the root causes of ill health and disease, increase coverage of essential health services; reduce catastrophic health spending; enhance digital health and innovation; prevent and manage disease outbreaks as well as mitigate climate change and address demographic changes. As we usher in the new GPW, I wish to congratulate you Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus on your leadership at the helm of this Organization as evidenced by the significant achievements of the Thirteenth General Programme of Work.

Under the leadership of Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO in the African Region has been leading a Transformation Agenda to ensure that the Organization is accountable, effective and driven by results. In this regard we are pleased that many countries have now undertaken reforms to improve health financing and delivery of quality essential health services.

In order for WHO to continue to provide adequate leadership and technical support to countries, it requires sustainable and flexible resources to enable cross funding for other broad priorities. The increase in WHO's assessed contributions and the first ever Investment Round are therefore important milestones to advance sustainable financing of the Organisation.

Excellencies and Delegates, the Seventy-fourth WHO Regional Committee for Africa is an important session in that you, Honourable Ministers and Heads of Delegation, will make important decisions for policy direction to advance the issues outlined and protect lives and livelihoods in the Region, including the recent declaration of mpox as a public health emergency of international concern by WHO and the Africa CDC.

Given that health is a prerequisite, indicator and outcome for sustainable development, it is our responsibility to remain steadfast in advancing our collective agenda and safeguarding our population's health.

I cannot conclude my speech without thanking you Member States of the African Region for your hard work and commitment which ensured that the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly approved amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005). We also agreed to preserve the gains achieved so far in the draft Pandemic Agreement, and therefore we need to work collectively to realize the conclusion of the negotiations in a timely manner. In order to achieve this, Member States will need to demonstrate their fullest commitment and solidarity through agreement to address equity with clear and tangible outcomes.

Finally, I recognize that we have a busy agenda before us for the next five-days. I am, however, confident that we will work efficiently to conclude the objectives of this Regional meeting.

I therefore invite you all to embody the pace of Tebogo Letsile from Botswana, who is the 2024 Olympic gold medallist in the 200 m sprint.

I thank you.