

Remarks for High Commissioner of Canada at Joint Annual Health Sector Review Policy Meeting – Dodoma, Monday November 26th

*Honorable Minister **Ummy Mwalimu**, Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly, Children*

*Honorable Minister **Jafo Suleiman**, Presidents Office - Regional and Local Government,*

*Honorable Permanent Secretary **Dr. Mpoki**, Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly, Children*

*Honorable Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Presidents Office - Regional and Local Government, **Dr. Zainabu Chaula**,*

***Prof. Kambi Mohamed** Chief Medical Officer,*

Government officials of the United Republic of Tanzania

Representatives of CSOs and the private sector

Heads of Cooperation, Country Representatives, Development Partners,

Invited guests, good morning.

It is a pleasure for me to be here with all of you today to give remarks on behalf of the Development Partners supporting the health sector in Tanzania at this year's Joint Annual Health Sector Policy Meeting.

Every year, through the Health Sector Wide Approach's Joint Annual Review Process, we convene to reaffirm our **commitment** to the health sector, as Development Partners, as Government, as civil society, private sector and other stakeholders. Our commitment to support

country-led priorities is demonstrated by our joint review of achievements, lessons, data and challenges and agreement to a set of priorities along which we align and coordinate our technical and financial assistance.

Last year, Honorable Minister, you requested we work together to hold this review process in time to allow for our jointly agreed priorities to guide the health sector planning and budgeting process, thus, allowing our commitments to be translated into actions. In the past, we haven't always been able to fully realize results from our commitments, simply because we were out of step. The policy priorities were finalized after plans and budgets were already set. We congratulate your government for its success in holding this year's review in alignment with the planning and budgeting cycle and we look forward to this yielding concrete actions.

The Government of Tanzania has made a strong commitment to work towards Universal Health Coverage. This holds the promise of health services for every person in every village, ensuring that:

- all people can access quality health services,
- all are safeguarded from public health risks, and
- all are protected from impoverishment due to illness.

At its heart is the right to health of all citizens.

As part of efforts towards this and other Sustainable Development Goals, Tanzania has drafted a Health Financing Strategy, has recently adopted a Health-In-All-Policies approach and, is working to obtain approval for a new Single National Health Insurance scheme. Your Development Partners encourage you, Honorable Minister, to continue championing this Health Financing Strategy so that it can be finalized. We applaud these efforts to put in place the foundations of a sustainable health system as an investment in Tanzania's human capital.

This year's policy priorities clearly recognize the challenges before us. We are faced with a significant gap between the ambitions of the Health Sector Strategic Plan IV and the available human resources and financing to deliver its targets. Tanzania's health policies and strategies are yielding progress. But to spur faster and sustainable progress, we need to focus on the things that will have the most impact - as quickly and as efficiently as possible - for the maximum number of poor and vulnerable people. We do not have easy choices, and so we must be guided by global and Tanzanian evidence when making our decisions. Development Partners strongly support the prioritization of improved data management to ensure Tanzania continues to have the reliable and objective data we all need for our evidence-based decision making, as part of our mutual accountability for delivering on the SDGs.

Broadly, the recommendations outlined in the Policy Priorities renew our existing commitment to addressing high maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity -- including by supporting the sexual and reproductive health and well-being of adolescents and by scaling up a comprehensive family planning program.

In Tanzania, there has been a strong commitment to improved adolescent health and wellbeing, recognizing that adolescents are among the most vulnerable and invisible members of society, with their needs often missing from our efforts. Development partners support the government's drafting of the National Accelerated Action and Investment Agenda for Adolescent Health and Wellbeing and are keen to see the budgeting and implementation of this agenda this year.

The priorities also commit us to an approach grounded in community based strategies that will improve coverage, access and use - along with effective referrals to the facility. Health policies and systems must actively seek to address the social determinants of health, such as gender, age, and socioeconomic status. In many countries, being born female or to a poor family dramatically lowers the chances of living a healthy life, with dignity and without discrimination.

This community based approach is particularly important to these goals, because being healthy doesn't start at a health facility, it starts at home. Development Partners strongly support Tanzania's efforts to build a health system that is able to promote good health and healthy behaviours and that works to address the gender, age and other barriers facing poor and marginalized women and girls, starting in homes and communities. We support complementing this with efforts to deliver accessible, high quality, cost effective and evidence-based interventions at the primary care level, with a strong referral system for those in need.

Honorable Ministers, Development Partners enthusiastically applaud the recent approval of the Scheme of Service for Community-based health workers. We look forward to supporting this as a priority action over the coming year. We will work with you to ensure Community Health Workers are well trained and come from the communities that they will support. This connection to the community is essential to shifting the behaviors and norms that are barriers to healthier choices and better use of essential services. The Community Health Workers who will be deployed will need to support women and girls' decision making and engage men and community leaders, to reduce gender based violence and better support the reproductive health, nutritional status and well-being of women, adolescent girls and children. We are hopeful that Community Health Workers can encourage progress on areas that have been difficult to move but are essential to Tanzania's future - like stunting, high adolescent fertility, stagnant modern contraceptive use and high unmet need for family planning. Community health workers can also assist in prevention of communicable and non-communicable diseases through such actions for example, sensitization of communities in the improvement of hygiene and sanitation. As Development Partners, we will work with your relevant ministries, local government authorities and training institutions, to train and equitably deploy these community level resources and help you find ways to sustainably finance this cost moving forward.

The large gaps in Human resources for health are not just at the community level. There are critical gaps at dispensaries, health centers and hospitals. These gaps are well-documented and we all recognize that they are impeding access, utilization and quality. For

Development Partners, filling the gaps in human resources in primary care facilities are a top priority to be addressed side by side with efforts within communities, with sustainable financing in support of both. We believe that we need to move faster - together - to address the barriers that are created by the profound lack of Human Resources for Health. Efforts to rapidly increase health infrastructure are ambitious and certainly respond to a clear need. We are all eager to see fewer deaths and injuries from pregnancy, childbirth, non-communicable and communicable disease, especially among the mothers and newborns these infrastructure investments aim to serve.

We Development Partners hope that you will agree that the current infrastructure investments can only translate into the targeted health outcomes if these upgraded facilities are fully equipped and have water and electricity. And most importantly, when they are staffed with skilled health workers who can safely offer good quality health services. We are ready to work together with you to support this, so that all rehabilitated facilities open their doors to provide fully operational health services as soon as possible. We look forward to seeing results in terms of better health outcomes.

This year's theme for the Joint Annual Health Sector Review was "Direct Health Facility Financing", a new approach to health financing that uses funding from Development Partners through the Health Basket Fund. Direct Health Facility Financing is a bold and innovative move – it puts funds directly into the hands of facilities and communities to use and manage based on the community's identified primary healthcare needs. During our joint field visit, we were all pleased to see the positive early results emerging from this approach, such as decreased instances of essential medicines being out of stock. If evidence shows this is an effective way to improve the quality and accessibility of services, donor funds can't be the only funding that is channeled this way. For sustainability, we support the government's commitment in this year's policy priorities to assess the feasibility of disbursing domestic resources through Direct Health Facility Financing. As Development Partners, we see a clear need to harmonize and streamline funding mechanisms. We are hopeful that such an ap-

proach would achieve this goal, also helping to improve the budget execution rate and therefore making fuller use of the funds that are allocated to health. While Direct Health Facility Financing will allow facilities some control over ensuring that they have the commodities required **at all times**, other actions are needed to continue to strengthen the whole supply chain system. In particular, we need to strengthen the Medical Stores Department's ability to maintain and manage an efficient and cost-effective system of procurement, storage and distribution of approved medicines and supplies across Tanzania. This will help us to reach the last mile. Development Partners encourage repayment of Medical Stores Department's debt and will work with you, Honorable Ministers, to develop creative solutions - like a revolving fund – for hospitals and the use of prime vendors to support improved availability of health commodities.

Honorable Ministers, these remarks cannot end without talking about the ongoing threat of disease outbreaks. Global health emergencies, such as the current spread of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo, requires us to strengthen Tanzania's emergency preparedness. Tanzania is working hard to be ready should there be any cases of Ebola in Tanzania. We commend government efforts to institute an effective surveillance system and put the necessary logistics in place. We look forward to further strengthening this system at all entry points. We remain concerned about the persistence of cholera in Songwe region. To stop the spread of cholera, we need to ensure safe water supplies, adequate waste disposal, and sanitation for all households, schools, and health facilities. We also have to address cultural factors through full community involvement. We can only achieve all of this by mobilising resources from across all sectors of government, with strong leadership at all levels: this includes central government, regional administrations, local councils and wards and villages. Responding to health emergencies cannot be seen as the sole responsibility of the Ministry of Health. We commend the current multi-sector efforts and trust that the Prime Minister's Office will continue to provide leadership towards health security in Tanzania.

By anchoring your health systems in robust primary health care and public health protection, by seeking to address the social determinants of health, health care costs can be controlled. More importantly, reaching the poorest and most vulnerable and investing in everyone's health and human capital will support Tanzania's future prosperity and reduce poverty.

On behalf of the Development Partners in the health sector - I would like to extend our gratitude to the *Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children* as well as the *President's Office Regional Administration and Local Government* for the cooperation we Development Partners continue to enjoy with you.

I thank you all for your kind attention.

Asanteni kwa kunisikiliza.