

THE PRIVATE HEALTH SECTOR REMARKS
JOINT ANNUAL HEALTH SECTOR REVIEW POLICY MEETING
DECEMBER 4TH 2017

Hon. Permanent Secretaries, (Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children and DPS Presidents Office- RALG)

Chief Medical Officer,

Development Partners,

Commissioners, Directors and other key leaders at the Ministries,

Representatives of Civil Society Organizations and the Private sector

Invited guests,

Ladies and gentlemen, Good Morning!

I stand before you to deliver the Private Health Sector remarks on behalf of the Private Health Sector Service Providers at this important high-level policy meeting. I have the honour to read the following statement jointly prepared by CSSC, BAKWATA and APHFTA.

Honorable Chairman,

The private health sector in Tanzania highly appreciates the conducive and enabling environment that the Government has natured over the years for smooth operationalization of the private health sector activities and investments. The Joint Annual Health Sector Review platforms provided for partners to meet and discuss matters related to healthcare delivery in a constructive manner that makes Tanzania to be one among countries which observe good governance.. This would not have been possible without a dedicated and committed Government leadership through your respective Ministries. towards positive change and sustainable development.

Honorable Chairman,

For any country to continue being an investors' destination of choice, we need predictable policies and long-term goals and vision towards attaining our nation's mission. We are all aware of the Vision 2025, the MKUKUTA, the MDG, MMAM and now the Sustainable Development Goals and the Ministry of Health HSSPs I-IV.

We should remain fixed on our Vision 2025 agenda which entails all the aforementioned priority agendas, and we keep focused on moving together in the same direction, especially in the health sector. We look forward to a health agenda that's focused on achieving its strategies with clear and predictable policies that would encourage more investments in the sector.

Honorable Chairman,

We have in the past few years stressed on predictable policies and regulations as key to obtaining investors confidence. This is true in any economy that is open to domestic and foreign investors. When we have our good policies in place and the regulators are well aware of them and are dedicated to ensure the nations adheres to them, then we can all go out there and confidently invite investors to come into the country and invest in modern healthcare facilities. The problem is when we have numerous regulators each coming to the facility with its laws and policies, and each with its own charges, which at the end of the day are confusing and overburdening to the investor. The investor in this case has no option but to pack and go, closing down the facility. Its time that this matter should be taken seriously and we should make required changes. From the point of entry, the immigration officer and the law enforcers, the taxi driver, the hotels, all the government offices, we should show that we are an investor's destination of choice. We therefore request the Ministry to fast track the harmonization of its multiple regulatory boards, which have become a burden to the private sector. We need to make changes here.

Honorable Chairman,

The Private Health Sector would like to take this opportunity to assure the responsible Ministries that the sector will fully cooperate with all stakeholders, and will continue to deliver quality healthcare services to our people.

The private health sector has been implementing quality improvement programs for several years now even before the star-rating program was introduced. The private health sector embraced the Safecare and 5S –Kaizen quality improvement programs as soon as they were introduced in the country. We are therefore continuing to invest more on quality improvement.

Honorable Chairman,

The private health sector appreciates the invitation by your Ministry to revise the Basic Standard Guidelines, which had set the bar too high for a developing country like Tanzania. We are happy at the progress made so far and we look forward to the completion of an accommodating guideline that will consider the private health sector's working environment, and we will all work hard to ensure its implementation. We all would like to deliver quality services, but in a step-wise manner, while doing our best to provide the required services to our citizens.

Honorable Chairman,

The private sector continues to complement the Government's efforts to address the achievement of quality services for Reproductive, Maternal Newborn Child and Adolescent Health in the country through various evidence based intervention packages. The current status of Maternal and Newborn health shows us that in order to realize the Sustainable Development goal 3 of Ensuring Good Health and wellbeing for all at all ages more commitment is needed in engaging the Private Sector under the Public Private Partnership approach; Service level Agreement being its important tool that when fully implemented, can help address the continued challenges of high Maternal and Newborn Mortality and morbidity.

Honorable Chairman,

Access to affordable finance in healthcare is key to the development of the health sector all over the world. In Tanzania the private health sector has straggled with this for decades. Commercial banks have not been very accommodating to the sector. But in recent years, we saw Medical Credit Fund coming up with innovative financing for the sector, and to-date many private facilities have benefited from their financing mechanism, which is linked to quality improvement. We have also witnessed Afya Microfinance established in the past few years, and has already served hundred of lower end healthcare providers, including ADDOs and pharmacies. The private health sector will continue to explore more innovative approached of financing the sector, and will continue to attract more investments as well.

Honorable Chairman,

Allow us to comment on the private healthcare training institutions in our country. A few years ago there was a plea by the government for the private sector to invest in healthcare training institutions. The private sector responded positively and we have seen establishment of tens of mid-cadre training institutions all over the country. We believe that if we will be able to offer quality education we will be able to 'export' the excess human capital abroad. We can see several Asian economies depending on their professional in the diaspora. What we need in quality competitive education. Emphasis on language proficiency, professionalism, and competence is key to achieving this. Even now that we have more than a thousand medical doctors on the streets with no employment, it shows there is something that needs to be done on the quality of education that we offer, and the need to prepare our students for entrepreneurship and competition in the international human capital markets. Its also time that we should consider establish a fund to provide loans for the mid cadre medical students, most of whom drop from school due to inability to pay the required fees.

Honorable Chairman,

The private health sector is now working on plans to absorb the medical graduates on the streets. But two policies/regulatory issues stand on our way:

1. Graduate medical doctors should be allowed to operate polyclinics as soon as they get their certificate of internship. This is practiced in other countries within the East African Region with no problems reported so far.
2. The National Health Insurance Fund should register facilities as soon as the Private Hospitals Advisory Board (PHAB) registers them. At the moment the facilities are required to operate for three years before they can be registered by the NHIF. This is not accommodating to the Universal Health Coverage Concept, especially when we are encouraging more citizens to join the NHIF towards achieving the UHC Agenda. This policy of NHIF is also discouraging investments in healthcare.

Honorable Chairman,

We acknowledge the efforts of the Government, Development Partners, CSOs, Private Sector and the communities in ensuring that the country attains the Sustainable Development Goals.

This can be achieved if we all continue to commit ourselves fully in implementing what we have planned and agreed to achieve, being led by the HSSP IV.

Honorable Chairman,

Kindly allow me to wish all of us successful meeting with fruitful deliberations.

Thank you very much for listening.