Opening Statement by the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan

Yasuhisa Shiozaki

Thematic Session II

August 27, 2016, KICC Amphitheater

Nairobi, Republic of Kenya

Honorable Heads of State and Government, Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, colleagues in the global health community, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon.

I am very pleased to co-chair this session on health care in Africa, together with our ever inspiring global health leader, Dr. Jim Yong Kim, the President of the World Bank Group.

Ladies and gentlemen, protecting human security is emerging as a core challenge for political leaders, who are concurrently dealing with refugee and migration crises, climate change, and disease epidemics. The Ebola virus outbreaks in West Africa exposed fundamental fragility in global health architecture as well as in health systems.

This is a crucial juncture for the future of global health. It is here in Africa that comprehensive actions are most urgently needed to strengthen health systems to improve preparedness for and response to health emergencies with the goal of achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC). In this spirit, we will discuss key pressing issues of health security and UHC.

The first agenda is “reinforcing global health architecture to strengthen preparedness for and response to public health emergencies”. Now the world needs well-balanced and comprehensive strategy more than ever in order to deal with health emergencies, the global community including the World Health Assembly and G7 Ise-Shima Summit this May agreed that the global coordination arrangement is desperately essential for large-scale health emergencies. I understand that the final deliberation of concrete Standard Operating Procedure is under way to ensure coordinated response among key organizations including WHO and UNOCHA under the UN Secretary General and I am confident that this process will be concluded in due course.

Under this global coordination arrangement, the WHO emergency reform package led by Dr. Chan was adopted at the World Health Assembly this May. The reform includes the “One WHO” approach to respond coherently to Grade 1 to 3 emergencies under one clear line of command and authority, and creation of WHO’s Contingency Fund for Emergencies (CFE). I would also like to highlight the World Bank’s efforts under the leadership of Dr. Kim in this area of health security including the establishment of the Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility (PEF).

The second agenda that we will discuss today is health systems strengthening toward universal health coverage (UHC).

Ladies and Gentlemen, UHC is the cornerstone of social and economic development. It could reduce risks in individual’s life as well as those in a society. It could mitigate social disparities and it could also even contribute to political stability. This is why Prime Minister Abe, in his contribution to the Lancet last December, clearly shared his vision to global momentum towards UHC, that is to say “all people can receive the basic quality health services they need at an affordable price, and are protected from health threats”, a very core concept of human security that Japan has pursued for years globally.

In this sense, I welcome the just-launched “UHC in Africa: A Framework for Action”, as a powerful tool for each and every African country to design and implement its own roadmap toward achieving UHC. I also welcome President Kim’s commitment of 15 billion US dollars in the next 5 years for African countries’ efforts towards achieving UHC. I commend President Kim’s exceptional leadership for this initiative.

I, as Health Minister of Japan, would like to reiterate my sincere commitment to tackling the most pressing health challenges in Africa, namely ensuring health security and achieving UHC. In fact, Prime Minister Abe pledged in May this year approximately 1.1 billion US dollars for global health institutions including 50 million US dollars to WHO’s emergency activities and World Bank’s Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility (PEF) respectively as a testament to Japan’s commitment to address global health challenges. This 50 million US dollars includes our contribution to WHO’s new health emergency activities. We are happy to contribute the half of it by the end of this year to respond to urgent needs especially in Africa.

Taking advantage of the collective wisdom we now share in this room, I am totally convinced that today’s discussion will lay a solid foundation for a healthier future for the people in Africa and the global community.

Thank you.