**COVID-19 STATEMENT BY HON. MINISTER OF HEALTH, RWANDA**

**(70th RC virtual meeting of 25/08/2020)**

Excellency the Chairperson of 70th Regional Committee for Africa,

Excellency the Director General of WHO, Dr Tedros,

Excellency the Regional Director of WHO – AFRO, Dr Moeti,

Dear Ministers of Health,

Distinguished Guests,

The spread of the Covid-19 virus has created an unprecedented health crisis across the world.

As soon as Covid-19 was declared a global health crisis, the Government of Rwanda established a National Steering Committee which put in place a multisectoral Covid-19 Joint Task Force to coordinate the development and implementation of the Covid-19 National Emergency Response Plan. The Plan included a robust surveillance system and risk communication and community engagement activities to raise awareness on preventive measures of the disease, and of course the testing of people.

To break the chain of transmission, Rwanda has adopted a strategy for testing all suspect cases, contract tracing, isolation and treatment. Fully operational Rapid Response Teams have been established at Central and Decentralized levels. More recently, the country introduced a home-based care system to ensure the treatment and monitoring of asymptomatic Covid-19 cases from their homes. Electronic bracelets are used for effective enforcement of home-based quarantine.

Furthermore, as we await the arrival on market of a Certified WHO vaccine, joint efforts should be made to avail affordable Covid-19 Antigen based test in the perspective of massive testing and home-based care of Covid-19 by Community Health Workers. This will reduce pressure on Health Facilities and the Health Workforce.

Five months into the pandemic, we conducted so far 300,000 tests. As of now, the country counts over 2,700 total cases with close to 70% recoveries and 11 deaths. The supply chain was reinforced for faster procurement of all required commodities.

As a digital oriented nation, Rwanda understands the impact of digital solutions and other technologies to solve health related challenges. As such, the Government of Rwanda launched the use of Drones for awareness campaigns in certain communities and the use of Robots in reducing contact between Medical Personnel and Patients in Treatment Centers.

Moreover, in partnership with other East African Countries, the GoR looks forward to have in place a functional electronic tracking system of Covid-19 Lab certificate for truck drivers. Additional efforts are required to implement a well synchronized, adequate and comprehensive response across EAC region.

A successful national response, would not have been possible without a very strong Leadership, a resilient Health System, a Multisectoral Approach and the involvement of our communities in complying with Covid-19 preventive measures including the Lockdown.

Rwanda remains committed to avail its performing Immunization Program to test the safety, efficacy of Covid-19 Vaccine and ensure its large-scale administration.

The Covid-19 pandemic revealed how Countries’ systems are interconnected and how vulnerable our populations are for a pandemic like Covid-19, which completely ignores borders and the socio-economic status of affected populations.

We call upon International solidarity to avail all required financial resources to contain and mitigate the socio–economic impact of Covid-19. The support to Africa Medical Supplies is also required because it shows how essential commodities can be availed to the country. We expect that this Platform will serve especially once the Covid-19 Vaccine will be available.

We strongly believe that it is together that we shall defeat Covid-19 - there is no other reliable option. I Thank you all for your attention.