

MINISTRY OF HEALTH, MALAWI

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF HEALTH OF MALAWI, HON. KHUMBIZE
KANDODO CHIPONDA, PM,**

ON UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE, AFR/RC71/INF.DOC/6)

REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA

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Chairperson,

Honourable Ministers

Regional Director

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Malawi has the honour to deliver this statement on Universal Health Coverage (**AFR/RC71/INF.DOC/6**) and seeks to propose that there is need for a World Health Assembly (WHA) resolution on hand hygiene in the context of UHC.

Chairperson, as we all know, handwashing is one of the most effective disease prevention methods available. Public health is impossible without access to clean water, soap and hygiene services in homes and for frontline health workers, their patients and communities. Good hygiene not only underpins public health, it protects economies and advances national development and prosperity. Despite this, hygiene has not been adequately prioritized leading to a situation where globally:

- 2.3 billion people (or 1 in 3) do not have soap and water for handwashing at home

- 1 in 3 healthcare facilities do not have amenities to clean hands where care is provided

Driving action and investment in hand hygiene is fundamental to building healthy resilient societies because:

- **Hand hygiene protects people from health emergencies and disease outbreaks:** Hand hygiene is a critical component of disease prevention, preparedness and response, and yet consistent handwashing practice is often hindered by poor access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in health and non-health settings. The current pandemic illustrates the vital importance of continued investment in comprehensive disease prevention measures, which are critical to strengthening preparedness and response to other diseases including cholera and neglected tropical diseases, as well as emerging health threats such as antimicrobial resistance.
- **Hand hygiene is a prerequisite for achieving UHC:** Inadequate hand hygiene resulting from lack of WASH in healthcare facilities undermines provision of safe, quality healthcare leading to preventable infections and deaths particularly among women and children; reduces health worker motivation and safety; and discourages healthcare seeking behaviours such as women choosing to give birth in healthcare facilities. Such situations adversely impact all healthcare provision and will prevent the achievement of UHC. At the same time, improving hygiene practices empowers individuals and communities to play a significant role in prevention of infections including diarrhoea and pneumonia, reducing disease burden, and contributing to improved health outcomes.

A hygiene resolution would promote and strengthen the development and implementation of costed national hygiene roadmaps; enhance collection, analysis and use of robust data for decision making; and drive a whole of society and whole of government approach to hand hygiene for

all. By seizing the opportunity of heightened awareness and priority of hand hygiene catalysed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Member States, WHO and partners have a unique opportunity to promote concrete action and secure investment to accelerate the scale up of hygiene behaviours globally.

Chairperson, Regional Director, distinguished ladies & gentlemen, I thank you for your kind attention.