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Lomé, Togo, 22–26 August 2022

**ADDRESS OF PROFESSOR MOUSTAFA MIJIYAWA, MINISTER OF HEALTH,
PUBLIC HYGIENE AND UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE OF TOGO**

Your Excellency, President of the Republic,
Right Honourable Prime Minister,
Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,
Distinguished Heads of Institutions of the Republic,
Director-General of WHO,
Honourable fellow Ministers of Health,
Honourable former Prime Ministers,
Your Excellencies, members of the diplomatic corps and representatives of international institutions,
WHO Regional Director for Africa,
Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development of the African Union Commission,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Venerable traditional rulers,
Religious, administrative, civilian and military authorities,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great and singular honour for me to stand before this august assembly to wish our guests a warm and fraternal welcome to Togo. This is both a requirement of decorum and a sacred duty, as it draws from the wellspring and resources of Togo. Accordingly, it is worthwhile to recall that the people of Togo hail from successive migrations that originated from the empires that left an unforgettable imprint on Africa in the Middle Ages. These historical considerations establish a connection between the Togolese and African identities and by the same token, recognize the intrinsic and spontaneous hospitality of the Togolese people. Togo's hospitality is anchored in, and sustained by its resources, notably its human resources, epitomized by the Head of State: a party leader who shuns partisanship; a unifier who builds without seeking to divide; a politician who, imbued with a spirit of statesmanship, swiftly transformed himself into a statesman.

Distinguished guests, dear colleagues and dear delegates, For all these reasons that are based on achievements and innate factors, fate and necessity, organization and spontaneity, planning and improvisation, history and geography, each of you should feel at home, as the division of our peoples is artificial and illusory, while their unity is natural and mandatory.

Director-General of WHO, Regional Director for Africa, fellow ministers of health,

This is a unique and hugely emotional moment; hosting this important meeting is a memorable opportunity and a source of pride for Togo. We would like to express to you our gratitude for this token of trust as well as our resolve to meet all your expectations, and crave your indulgence for any shortcomings.

This Seventy-second session is taking place at a time when Togo has made significant progress in the health sector, with the opening and strengthening of medical and paramedical training centres (two faculties of health sciences providing some 15 medical and surgical specialties, a paramedical school in each of our economic regions, all of which train about 1000 health workers every year), recruitment of 7000 health workers into the public service over the past 10 years, rehabilitation, construction and equipping of health infrastructure, sound management of resources allocated to the sector, mounting an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic, improving health indicators both for communicable and noncommunicable diseases as well as for maternal and child health, routine immunization, the prevention and control of neglected tropical diseases, implementation of significant institutional, legal and operational measures to advance universal health coverage and social protection. The measures implemented in the health sector are closely related to those implemented in the other sectors, which have culminated in a package of policies unified in an overarching policy, as health is too complex to be left to the ministry of health alone.

Your Excellency, President of the Republic, Director-General of WHO, distinguished guests,

Our health policy therefore, is tailored to the needs of our population; it builds on lessons learnt from past experiences and is perfectly aligned with the various themes of the present Regional Committee session, embracing all the pillars of the health system and factoring in new imperatives and challenges, but also the contribution of new technologies. The outcome is a shared vision that unites the brain and the heart, the rational and the emotional, the economic and the social, stringency and flexibility, with the goal of making possible that which is necessary by means of reason, and making the impossible possible through imagination and tenacity. This entire process vividly recalls the pillars of one of the oldest constitutions of the world, the Mandé Charter, which was the foundation of Soundiata Keita's kingdom. It also recalls the vision of other heroes and martyrs of our common history, such as Chaka Zulu, Usman Dan Fodio the inimitable, Abdel Kader the magnificent, El Haj Omar Tall, the visionary, Gbéhanzin, the astute helmsman, Samory Touré, the builder, and of course, Director-General, Menelik the Great.