



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

SPEECH BY

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH

HONOURABLE DR. JOSEPH KASONDE MP

**AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE
PARTNERSHIP FOR MATERNAL NEWBORN AND CHILD HEALTH
BOARD MEETING**

14TH OCTOBER, 2015

INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL

SALUTATIONS

The Board Chair of the Partnership for Maternal Newborn and Child Health

Mrs. Gracia Machel

The Former First Lady of Zambia, Dr Christine Kaseba

The Executive Director for the PMNCH

The Permanent Secretary MoH

The Permanent Secretary MCDSW

The Permanent Secretary Ministry of Home Affairs

Your Excellences from the United Nations Family

Your Excellences from the Diplomatic Corps

Members and associate members of the PMNCH Board

Senior Government Officials

Members of the Press

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

CLOSING REMARKS

It gives me great pleasure to join you after three exhaustive but fulfilling days of hard work. I am sure the board meeting has brought out a lot of important issues that concern the health of women and children.

Ladies and gentlemen

As we are all aware, we are on the verge of closing the MDG chapter and ushering in the SDG era. Looking back, we can be proud about what we have achieved for women, children and adolescents. While patting ourselves on the back for reduction in maternal mortality, we should remain mindful that the ratio at 398 per 100,000 live births is still very high. Our mothers still continue dying needless deaths. This is even more depressing when we recognize that low cost technologies for addressing this state of affairs are available.

Ladies and gentlemen.

We stand today on a critical threshold for global health and development. A quarter century ago, more than half a million women worldwide died annually due to childbirth, and more than 12 million children perished before the age of five, mainly from preventable causes. Today, with the Millennium Development Goals -and thanks to the collective efforts of so many in this room - these numbers have been nearly cut in half.

Ladies and gentlemen

As has shown by the Lancet Commission on Investing in Health, a global convergence on maternal, newborn, and child health is possible within a generation – that is, if governments and donors invest sufficiently and smartly. And these investments will not only save lives, they will drive economic growth and prosperity.

Ladies and gentlemen

Zambia has steadily increased its national budgetary expenditure on health over the years, and will continue striving to reach the target of 15% of the National budget. This will release resources for improvement of the women and children's health; and strengthen access to family planning information and services in order to reduce unwanted pregnancies and abortions, especially among adolescent girls

Ladies and gentlemen

I wish to acknowledge, that with support from our cooperating partners, Zambia has made progress in increasing its budgetary allocation to family planning commodities, striving to eliminate the unmet need for family planning and improve universal coverage through an expanded method mix and increased access, particularly to the underserved population. We commit ourselves to continue on this path and even do better.

Ladies and gentlemen

As a country, we are mindful that we need to rationalize our use of resources. It has been shown that countries at all income levels are pursuing universal health coverage. They are responding to their emerging health needs and disease burdens, closing gaps in access to quality care, and protecting their poorest and most vulnerable populations. As more countries move toward universal coverage, fewer mothers die in childbirth, and more babies are born healthy. Zambia will not be left behind.

To The Partnership for Maternal Newborn and Child Health Board, I wish to urge you to support countries with multi-stakeholder dialogue within countries and strengthen South to South cooperation.

I am hopeful that the objectives set that for this meeting have been achieved. I look forward to the approved 2016 to 2020 strategic plan to guide the PMNCH board.

Ladies and gentlemen

In closing, allow me to sincerely thank all participants that found time to come and deliberate on our collective achievement over the last couple of years and chart the way forward in advancing our common agenda of improving maternal, newborn and child health. We wish to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to continuing the Global Strategy. To reiterate, Zambia commits itself to:

- Strengthening access to adolescent sexual and reproductive services prioritizing reduction of teenage pregnancy and elimination of child marriage by 2030.
- Elimination of un-met need for family planning and Elimination of mother to child transmission of HIV.
- Ensuring availability of bundled vaccines and cold chain equipment and implement equity focused immunization programme reaching every child by 2030.
- Scaling up of nutrition sensitive and nutrition specific interventions including the 1000 days' strategy to reduce stunting by 2030. Strengthening the Human Resource for Health capacity to meet the country's demand for 'equitable and sustainable skilled birth attendance; and fostering community participation, including a sustainable community health worker and community health assistant Programme to take the services to the last mile.
- Ensuring increased minimum allocation of the health sector budget for Reproductive Maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health.

I wish to thank you all for choosing Zambia to host the PMNCH Board meeting and look forward to hosting you again.

Thank you and may God bless you all as you return to your respective countries. It is now my rare honour and privilege to declare the meeting officially closed