



South Centre Statement*

NAM Health Ministerial

23 May 2017

Geneva

Dr. Edgar Rivera, Vice-Minister of Health of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; Ambassador Jorge Valero, Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement in Geneva; Distinguished health ministers of the member States of the Non-Aligned Movement; Distinguished delegates; Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour for the South Centre to speak at this 10th Ministerial meeting of the health ministers of the member States of the Non-Aligned Movement. I wish to convey the best wishes of our Executive Director, Dr. Martin Khor, and the Chairman of the Board of the South Centre, H.E. former President Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania, for the successful holding of this 10th health ministerial meeting of the NAM.

The Non-Aligned Movement has historically been a champion in expressing the views and interests of developing countries in the multilateral arena, ever since the declaration of its founding principles in the 1955 Bandung Africa-Asian Conference and the 1961 Belgrade Summit that established the Non-Aligned Movement.

The NAM has long stood for the unity and solidarity of developing countries as they continue their common journey in improving the lives of their peoples. This is clearly shown in the NAM's long-standing emphasis that the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is among the most basic rights of every human being.

Through the NAM's annual ministerial meetings on health, the NAM has served as a valuable vehicle through which developing countries are able to coordinate their positions in pursuing their efforts to strengthen coordinated global action on global health issues and to enhance the ability of the World Health Organization to deliver on and be more responsive to the needs of developing countries in the health arena.

The South Centre, as the intergovernmental thinktank of developing countries, fully supports the NAM in this endeavour.

Addressing global health issues in a coordinated manner is now more important than ever for developing countries. Multiple global challenges such as climate change, global economic uncertainty and increasing economic difficulties in many developing countries, instability within and among countries, the emergence of pandemics, the rise of anti-microbial resistance, inadequacies in health-related infrastructure and resources, among other things, are putting the national health systems of developing countries under much greater stress than ever before.

Addressing these effectively will require increased levels of global cooperation and coordination by all countries and multilateral institutions.

* Delivered by Vicente Paolo B. Yu III, Deputy Executive Director, South Centre, 23 May 2017, Room XII, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages is Goal 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals under the 2030 Agenda that was agreed to in 2015. In this context, the role of the World Health Organization continues to be extremely important. It serves as the sole multilateral institution in which developing countries can and should engage fully in order to shape multilateral norms and institutional arrangements for enhancing global health cooperation.

I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the South Centre, to congratulate Dr. Chan on her leadership and the tremendous contributions that she has made over the past 10 years in improving the organization.

Indeed, in partnership with the WHO's Member States, it is the vision and leadership qualities of its Director-General that crucially shape the direction of the organization.

As the WHO elects a new Director-General, such vision and leadership should be focused on enhancing the role of the WHO as a catalyst, enabler, and norm-setter for coordinated and effective global health cooperation. This is particularly important in terms of the role of the WHO in supporting the development of national and regional health systems, strengthening and making global health norms and guidelines, and in building the capacity of developing countries in providing for the health of their people.

For the WHO to be able to do this, it will be important for developing countries to ensure that priority-setting by the WHO continues to be set by the WHO Member States rather than be driven by external financing.

This can best be done through ensuring the full implementation of the Framework for Engagement with Non-State Actors as well as developing an operational conflict of interest policy, in order to ensure that the WHO is first and foremost accountable to its Member States.

This will also help ensure that priority-setting by the WHO will reflect the needs and interests of its developing country Member States, particularly with respect to ensuring the affordability of and access to medicines and medical technologies, including the creation of more policy space to ensure such affordability and access through pushing for flexibilities in the enforcement of intellectual property rights over such medicines and technologies; and addressing anti-microbial resistance while recognizing and reflecting the different concerns and capacities of developed and developing countries.

Through its policy research and analysis, and the technical assistance that it provides to developing countries in various multilateral policy areas that are of concern to developing countries, the South Centre seeks to understand, highlight and reflect the concerns and perspectives of developing countries. We look forward to doing so in global health issues together with the Non-Aligned Movement.

In closing, distinguished Ministers, let me reiterate the South Centre's continued support to the Non-Aligned Movement in working for a strengthened and inclusive global health agenda that ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all peoples all over the world.

Thank you very much.