



**World Health
Organization**

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR **Africa**

AFR/RC63/Conf.Doc/5
2 September 2013

REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Sixty-third session

Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, 2–6 September, 2013

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTER OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL
SECURITY, REPRESENTING THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, HEAD OF STATE
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY**

Honourable Minister of Health and Population,
Honourable Members of Government,
Honourable Ministers of Health of Member States
The Director General of WHO,
Excellencies, Heads of Diplomatic Missions and Representatives of International Organizations,
The WHO Regional Director for Africa,
The Senior Divisional Officer (*Préfet*) of Brazzaville,
Distinguished Delegates from Member States,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Sixty-third session of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa is opening today, here at its headquarters, situated close to the magnificent banks of River Congo.

Faithful to its tradition of warm reception and hospitality, as well as its pan-Africanist vocation and its commitment to regional integration, Congo is proud to host your meeting.

The Republic of Congo is all the more honoured to host the current meeting since it has brought together brothers and sisters from Africa, some of whom are visiting Brazzaville, the capital city of our country, for the first time.

The other participants, used to Brazzaville the “green city”, will simply find well-known and very familiar places.

We are particularly delighted that Dr Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization, is here with us today, a presence which remarkably increases the symbolic significance of the opening ceremony.

On behalf of the President of the Republic of Congo, His Excellency Mr Denis Sassou-Nguesso, we warmly welcome all of you, who have come from far or near, and wish you a pleasant stay in Brazzaville.

The highly-significant symbol of the opening of this session is further enhanced by the consolidation of the peace and stability in our country. This will indeed offer all the participants the necessary tranquillity for discussing the very crucial health concerns of the African Region.

Like most international organizations, which are confronted with the persistently weak world economic situation, the World Health Organization presents a clinical table that requires sustained attention and active mobilization of all member States.

Indeed, the financial difficulties facing the economies of donor countries are impacting and drastically reducing the operational capacities of WHO, and challenging the entire international community to show greater solidarity in order to overcome the current turbulence and plan, in unity and clear awareness of the issues at stake, for better prospects and more reassuring future in disease control.

With our backs against the wall, we need to take more credible initiatives, and constantly look for solutions that will sustainably protect us against the current disturbances.

“MELIOR CANIS VIVUS LEONE MORTO”

(A living dog is better than a dead lion)

It is precisely in view of his relentless efforts in this direction that I am happy to sincerely congratulate Dr Luis Gomes Sambo, the WHO Regional Director for Africa, while urging him to pursue the salutary restructuring already initiated at the Regional Office.

The different adjustment measures being implemented are part of our common desire to maintain a viable operational level in the health systems of our States.

“We must not refrain from sowing the effort for fear of crisis sparrows”

It is with these words, borrowed from a sentence attributed to SENEQUE, that I am suggesting that we adopt a responsible approach in the face of our respective commitments to the strategic health sector.

In its constant search for appropriate proposals and solutions, Congo is making a sustainable contribution to the setting up of the UNITAID funds.

The UNITAID funds, which come from taxes imposed on air tickets, somehow enable WHO to support the funding of activities aimed at combatting certain diseases like HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis or malaria.

For its part, Congo solemnly reaffirms its strong desire to honour all its commitments, including notably its contribution to the special funds created at the end of the meeting held in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, as well as its regular participation in the statutory contributions.

An advocate of regional integration, always concerned about providing a high level of health status for his compatriots and populations of Africa, the President of the Republic of Congo regularly shares, with WHO, his experience, his proximity and sensitivity to health concerns, which are always top priorities of his vision for Congo and Africa.

In his Social Project "**Path of the Future**", the President of the Republic of Congo decided to improve health delivery through, among other things, the provision of adequate health infrastructure in the country, training and motivation of the health staff, improvement of accessibility of all to health care and medicines.

The assessment recently made by the President of the Republic in his State of the Nation address of 12 August 2013 revealed the future prospects and eloquent testimony of the gigantic efforts already made by the Government in the health sector.

In that regard, construction of modern health infrastructure as well as improvement of hospital technical platforms in Brazzaville and in the interior of the country are in line with the desire of the President of the Republic to provide Congo with a health protection system that meets the expectations of the beneficiary populations.

Also, this meeting with the passing time, as well as with the future, marked by hopes and promises, the appreciable work accomplished in the context of health development in our country, will entail the establishment of an efficient operational backbone for health protection, as recommended by WHO.

In the same context, the ongoing preparatory work for the institution of the universal health insurance system in Congo translates this strong commitment to improving health care delivery and making the demand more solvent.

Furthermore, the actions taken by the partners to complement the efforts of the Government enhance the national response to the most prominent diseases in our country.

Finally, the campaigns regularly conducted with the support of Civil Society Organizations translate the important role played by non-governmental organizations in the disease control mechanisms.

It is the responsibility of the Government, social partners and the populations to constantly improve the levers of our partnership, adapt our working methods in the face of the constraints, and entirely in line with an exemplary collaboration involving consultation and dialogue between the different components of the national structure in charge of health concerns.

We are working towards the establishment of a health system for all, where no one will be left on the wayside in our country, be it the actors or the beneficiaries.

The Government is mobilized to offer the population the advantages of a health system that integrates and perceives, in its deepest essence, health as a basic right of the individual.

Honourable Ministers of Health of Member States

The Director General of WHO,

The WHO Regional Director for Africa,

Distinguished Delegates from Member States,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Beyond this encouraging panorama for Congo, the quasi uniformity of the health concerns of our States compels us to further mobilize for an efficient joint action that can further enhance the minimal and basic guarantees of health in Africa.

The globalizing nature of health is an efficient reference that renews, beyond our borders, the desire, the availability and the need of the States to work for the establishment of health for all.

More than usual and in this difficult period, the need for cohesion among African countries assumes a much higher importance in order to find sustainable solutions to the reduction of funds allocated to health systems in our respective countries.

We should rise to this task by the year 2015, which is the ultimate deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The peoples of Africa are listening and they expect clear results at the end of your deliberations.

Your meeting will be a landmark in history of our Organization, especially of the Regional Office for Africa.

May the deliberations of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa be enriched and adequately reflect the dynamic difference of our vision and issues on the values, practices and choices in the health sector on our continent.

I am convinced that your meeting will offer you the opportunity to efficiently address the concerns of our health systems.

“Yield not to misfortune; on the contrary, move ahead with greater determination”

It is with these words that SYBILLE de CUMES encourages ENEE.

And I am urging you, with these same words, to examine with greater rigour and relevance the various documents submitted for your appreciation, so that the resolutions and recommendations you adopt at the end of your deliberations will really help our countries.

Long Live the WHO Regional Committee for Africa!

Long live regional integration!

On behalf of the President of the Republic of Congo, Head of State, His Excellency Mr Denis Sassou-Nguesso, I declare open the Sixty-third session of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa.

I thank you for your kind attention.