

REMARKS BY H.E. JAKAYA MRISHO KIKWETE, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA, DURING OPENING CEREMONY OF LAUNCH OF DELIVER NOW FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN TANZANIA, DAR ES SALAAM, 22ND APRIL, 2008

The Rt. Honourable, Jens Stoltenberg, the Prime Minister of Norway, Honourable Mrs. Stoltenberg; Honourable Ministers; Members of the Diplomatic Corps; Dr. Francisco Songane, Director of the Global Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health; Distinguished Invited Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen;

We are glad and proud to have you join us on this important occasion. What we are doing tonight advances the agenda of the Network of Global Leaders. The essence of the creation of the Network of Global Leaders on MDG 4 and 5 is to give hope to women that they can survive the ordeals of giving life to a newborn citizen of Planet Earth. Also, to give hope to the newborn that they will live to see their fifth birthday and beyond.

Today, we are witnessing the practical side of the spirit of the initiative you very much conceived and are quite keen to see it nurtured to success. Both maternal and infant mortalities can be prevented through the right kind of intervention at the appropriate time. Indeed, what seemed elusive a few years ago looks probable now. Thanks to you Mr. Prime Minister for your leadership in both vision and action.

Honourable Prime Minister,

On behalf of the people of Tanzania, I want to thank you for your strong and consistent leadership on this issue of Maternal and Child Health Care. You have very ably steered international awareness and mustered multi-stakeholder response to deal with this matter of great concern to humanity. The Deliver Now Campaign we are here to officiate its official launch will surely benefit from the work of the Network of Global Leaders for MDG 4 and 5. We have every reason to thank you so much.

Mr. Prime Minister;

We are also privileged tonight to have with us Dr. Francisco Songane, the Director of the Global Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health. What an honour for Tanzania to have you in our midst. We thank you for the kind words you have said about our modest achievement on child mortality. We know we have much to do with regard to maternal

mortality rates. I thank you, Dr. Songane, for your leadership and passion on this important matter of saving the precious lives of mothers and their children.

I thank the Global Partnership for choosing Tanzania as one of the five (5) countries for direct engagement in 2007, as part of the multi-country approach towards accelerated scale up of effective intervention for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Tanzania deserves this kind of attention. Statistics tell us that each year about 8,100 women die of pregnancy and birth-related causes in Tanzania. Some 45,000 newborn die, and another 42,500 are stillborn; and 157,100 children die before their fifth birthday.

Five African countries account for half of Africa's newborn deaths and Tanzania is one of them. The others are Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Uganda. Globally, over five million neonatal deaths occur each year.

The main causes of under-five mortality include malaria, pneumonia, diarrhea, neonatal causes and malnutrition. But, the truth of the matter is that, these diseases and causes are preventable.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Maternal deaths which are mainly due to excessive bleeding before and after delivery, obstructed labour, infections, pregnancy induced hypertension and post abortion complications can be prevented as well. The other major indirect causes include malaria, anaemia and HIV/AIDS can also be prevented.

Delay in taking the right decision at home, delay in reaching to the health care facility and delay in receiving care at the health facility account for many women losing their lives. Increasing awareness and improving access to modern health care facilities will greatly help save many lives. This is the focus of our government's efforts in this regard.

I believe, we can certainly prevent two thirds of newborn deaths through essential Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health Care (MNCH) packages. We have to ensure high coverage and improved newborn care.

Addressing newborn health is a catalyst for improving both maternal and child health and accelerating progress towards implementation of MDG 4 and 5. For most effective care, a continuum linking maternal, newborn and child healthcare through the lifecycle and between homes and health facilities is needed.

Honourable Prime Minister, Invited Guests;

So far, in Tanzania, we are successfully reaching women with at least one antenatal visit. However, coverage of this care falls short at the time of birth. Only 46% of women receive skilled attendance at birth and even fewer receive postnatal care. It is indeed saddening that the coverage of care is lowest just as the risk of death for mothers and babies reaches its critical point. Yet this is a crucial time for other interventions, especially immunization, prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV and initiation of breast-feeding.

While maternal and child health services are offered free of charge, we know further efforts and support is needed to strengthen the quality of services provided. That is why your support and that of the Norwegian government is very critical. It is indeed a very much needed shot in the arm.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We in the government are taking measures to increase access to health care services. This year, we are launching the Primary Health Services Programme (MMAM) with a goal of giving access to modern health care facility for every Tanzanian within a distance of 5 kilometers from his or her home. This means building more dispensaries and health centers throughout the country and hiring more medical personnel. It also requires us to acquire the requisite medical equipment. Providing quality Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Services is a key component of the Programme. In fact it is the motivating factor.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Tanzania was one of the signatories of the Delhi Declaration in 2005, in which we committed to recognize that maternal, newborn and child health are inseparable and interdependent. We also made commitment to reorient our national development plans and budgets to fully achieve the maternal and child health Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

All along, we have been keen on developing One National Plan, One Coordinating Mechanism and One Monitoring System for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health.

It is gratifying that the One Plan for accelerating the reduction of maternal newborn and child mortality which we were looking forward to has been finalized.

Today, I am happy to perform the noble act of the official launch of the National Roadmap and Strategic Plan for Accelerating the Reduction of Maternal, Newborn and Child Deaths in Tanzania for the year 2008-2015.

Honourable Prime Minister,

We are grateful that the Global Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, the Deliver Now Initiative and the International Health Partnership will support the implementation of our National Road-map and Strategic Plan.

We recognize that there is a need to build and strengthen synergies between health and other sectors that are critical to women's and children's survival and well being.

It is also evident that significant new resources are needed to scale up interventions. The government is committed to reach the Abuja target to allocate 15% of total national budget to health in the next few years. This is a commitment that we must reach in order to make a difference. We are at 10.1 per cent. We will do every thing possible to move upwards.

Honourable Prime Minister;

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you once again for the support your country has extended for the improvement of the health of the people of Tanzania. We applaud the efforts you are expending on the realization of the objectives of MDG 4 and 5. I also thank all other bilateral and multilateral partners for their contribution and continued support for MDG 4 and 5 and the health sector as a whole.

The government will continue to cherish this support and we will certainly prove that these efforts were worth it. Indeed, as a member of the Network of Global Leaders advocating for MDG 4 and 5, I will continue to support these efforts in Tanzania and internationally.

Honourable Prime Minister, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

I thank you for your kind attention! I am now ready to do what is expect of me.