



THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

**OPENING REMARKS BY H.E DR. PHILIP ISDOR MPANGO, VICE
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA AT THE 31st
ANNUAL JOINT SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE OF THE NATIONAL
INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH (NIMR),**

**JNCC - DAR ES SALAAM,
17TH MAY 2022**

- *Hon. Ummu Ally Mwalimu (MP), Minister of Health;*
- *Hassan Abbas Rugwa, RAS Dar es Salaam*
- *Dr. Andrew Kitua, Chairman of the Council, National Institute for Medical Research;*
- *Professor Abel Makubi, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health;*
- *Dr. Aifello Sichalwe, Chief Medical Officer;*
- *Professor Yunus Mgaya, Director General, National Institute for Medical Research;*
- *Prof. Kilama, Retired 1st Director General of NIMR;*
- *Distinguished Representatives of International Organizations;*
- *Representatives of Government Ministries and Departments; RASs*
- *Our Religious Leaders;*
- *Heads of Public and Private Institutions;*
- *Online and offline Participants;*
- *All Keynote Speakers;*
- *Members of the Media;*
- *Distinguished Delegates;*
 - *African Leaders } ALMA*
 - *Malaria Alliance }*
 - *USA, UK, Senegal, Kenya, Uganda, RSA etc*
 - *within Tanzania*
- *Our Facilitator;*
- *Ladies and Gentlemen.*

It gives me great pleasure and honour to be here to officiate the opening of the 31st Annual Joint Scientific Conference of the National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR). I wish to acknowledge all distinguished speakers and participants joining us online and offline from all over the world. Thank you all for taking your time to link up with us. For our guests who are physically with us today, I am glad to extend to you a proudly Tanzania welcome, **KARIBU SANA**. The impressive turnout of over 350 participants present, testifies to the pivotal

role of medical research in Tanzania and the global scientific community in general. I therefore, thank you Honourable Minister of Health for inviting me to open this August conference. I also wish to highly commend you Honourable Ummu Mwalimu along side with the Council, Management and Staff of NIMR as well as the organizing committee of this conference for a job well done!

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This conference could not have come at a more opportune moment when the world is grappling with prominent health issues of our time. The participants in this conference know, better than me, the challenges posed by the recent global disease out breaks including the COVID-19 pandemic and polio. We are also witness to an increase in the incidence of non communicable diseases (heart disease, cancer, diabetes etc) which now account up to approximately 70% all deaths worldwide. Many developing countries including Tanzania, also continue to be haunted by health challenges driven by poverty, economic disparities and limited access to health care. Many of our countries are also facing serious health challenges as a result of climate change, water and air pollution. Furthermore, we have before us the spectre of human diseases transmitted from animals or animal products as well as biological weapons and increased vulnerability to diseases in war torn and conflict zones. In view of all these, the Tanzanian Government sees and believes in pioneering medical research as the Kingpin in making breakthroughs in all prominent health issues of our time, which transcend international borders.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This conference is therefore very important for us in Government and, let me say it in plain language that, we have very high expectations of the outcomes and recommendations of this conference. We see this forum as an opportunity of its kind for our scientists to learn from each other and pool your ingenuity and brain power to come up with ground breaking solutions to our most pressing health challenges.

I note with satisfaction the main theme of this conference, namely ***"A Multi-sectoral Approach for Health: An Agenda for Health Systems Strengthening towards Achieving Universal Health Coverage"***. This theme reflects the fact that access to all the necessary health services, anytime and anywhere, requires integrated sectoral plans. This is so because many health outcomes and risks are influenced or determined by policies and interventions in sectors other than health. Besides, other sectors also offer win-

win solutions for health. In other words, health is a cross-cutting issue, which in turn means that, in order for us to be successful in this sector, the government, private sector and all other stakeholders must collaborate or work together. I am sure I need not belabour the importance of a multi-sectoral approach for the attainment of Universal Health Coverage to this meeting of esteemed scientists. Dr. Kitua made this point elaborately citing the example of civil engineers and applied or practical health researches.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

There has indeed been a vast array of strategies and interventions put in place at global, regional, national and local level to ensure the achievement of universal health coverage. Here in Tanzania we have taken a number of steps aimed at bringing health care services closer to the people and achieving health care access for all Tanzanians. The Fourth Health Sector Strategic Plan (2015-2020) introduced a new funding strategy for the health sector focusing on improving the health insurance scheme. Similarly, in the Fifth Strategic Plan (2021-2026), the Government, working in collaboration with other stakeholders, expanded the scope of health insurance and encouraged citizens to join health insurance schemes in order to ensure that every citizen receives appropriate and timely health care. I commend NIMR's research input into this matter. In addition, Tanzania has also focused on financial risk protection, improving access to quality health care services and essential, safe and affordable medicines and vaccines for all, in line with SDG 3. Nonetheless, in spite of the above mentioned interventions, the challenges affecting the pace of implementation are still many. For example, available information shows that Tanzania and many other African countries still have limited capacities to identify emerging and variants of viruses/disease outbreaks as well as those transmitted from animals or caused by industrial/air pollution and how to deal with them. Lack or shortage of vaccines, medicines, medical equipment and skilled health care workers remains characteristic of most of our countries in the region, aggravated by inadequate financing!

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me confess that, Governments alone cannot resolve these challenges. We need at the very least you scientists and researchers to partner/collaborate in undertaking research and advise us accordingly on best courses of action that will enable us to further improve the health sector and address local problems with local solutions and global health challenges with global solutions. It is my

belief that, through research we can find answers to the unknown, fill gaps in our performance and deliver better health outcomes to our people. Let me also take this opportunity to beseech the private sector in Africa, separately or in partnership with Government/Public Sector, to prioritise funding of medical research. I for one, believe that this is a productive investment! On our part, the Government of Tanzania is keen to continue supporting the development and execution of innovative medical and scientific research to bolster quality and more effective health care delivery. I encourage researchers to develop projects that cover the range of global health challenges that I alluded to at the beginning, without forgetting to tap into available digital technologies. I am aware that NIMR houses the Health Research Trust Fund which supports research in priority health areas. Since its inception in 1996, the Trust Fund has been a source of small exploratory studies of relevance to our country. While the Government is highly committed to support this, it is my request that, you use this forum to deliberate on how other stakeholders can support this Fund. This will enable us to scale up health related research that focuses on our priorities as a country. I therefore urge the private sector once again to come forth to contribute to funding health research in Tanzania more sustainably.

At this point, it would be remiss of me not to commend the good work that NIMR has been pioneering on evidence-based health research in Tanzania to enhance disease management, prevention and control since it was established in 1979. Tanzanians remember well NIMR's contribution to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic during the early phase where NIMR collaborated and coordinated other health research institutions to advance research on traditional medicines that would treat not only COVID-19 but also other related diseases. The success made was astounding. The progress made in developing NIMRCAF should not stop with the corona virus outbreak as there is still a lot more to explore! As the Government continues to campaign for environmental conservation and tree planting, including medicinal plants and fruit trees, NIMR should scale up research on local herbal remedies known in each district of our country and strive to produce home made quality medicines and vaccines. The Government also applauds NIMR for creating a number of scientific awards to motivate and recognise talent including, but not limited to, the Maria Kamm Best Female scientist award and more recently the Mwelecela Malecela Memorial award. Congratulations in advance to all those researchers who will soon be recognised and awarded.

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me conclude my remarks by **first**, joining others who spoke before me to commend and thank the sponsors of this event. I hope that they will continue to support similar events and health research going forward as one of their Corporate social responsibility activities or as part of their regular support programs.

Second, it is my expectation that, in these three days as you are engrossed in discussing the keynote presentations findings from high-quality research, you will come up with short and long-term recommendations for the government and other stakeholders that will shape sustainable development efforts of the Health Sector. We look forward to receiving your practical recommendations for action. I take this opportunity to reiterate that, the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania is committed to achieve Universal Health Coverage and is more than ready to work with all stakeholders to this end; and I have tasked the Minister of Health to work with consult the Minister of State – PO PSM to see to it that more young health researchers are employed at NIMR etc.

Finally, following the footsteps of the NIMR Director General Prof. Yunus Mgaya I wish our guests a pleasant stay in this beautiful city of Dar es Salaam – the harbour of peace and also entice you to visit our unique tourist attractions such as the mighty Serengeti National Park, Ngorongoro, Mikumi & Ruaha National Parks, the Selous Game Reserve and Mount Kilimanjaro - the roof top of Africa. I also urge you to visit the spicy islands of Zanzibar where you will have the opportunity to taste the culture and hospitality of Zanzibaris as well as enjoy its pristine beaches!

With these few remarks, it is now my singular honour and pleasure to declare the 31st Annual Joint Scientific Conference of the National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR) officially open. I wish you all, very successful and fruitful discussions. I am now ready for the presentation of awards event.

THANK YOU!