



MINISTRY OF HEALTH

SPEECH BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR HEALTH DURING BRAIN HEALTH CONFERENCE AT RADISSON BLU IN NAIROBI, ON 17TH NOVEMBER, 2023.

THEME: Healing Brain-Bridging the gap in low & middle-income countries.

Ladies and gentlemen, all protocols observed

It is my pleasure to join you today at this important event that aims at improving brain health outcomes in low and middle-income countries by convening various experts and stakeholders in neuroscience and mental health from around the world.

The theme for this conference is **Healing Brain-Bridging the gap in low & middle-income countries**. It reflects a vital discussion that should be had, especially now that mental health is a growing concern globally. Approximately three-quarters of the global disease burden is due to mental and neurological disorders affecting low -and middle-income countries. Kenya is one of the lower middle-income country in Eastern Africa that has had keen interest in mental health over the last few years

Mental health is an integral part of health; a growing concern in Kenya, as it is at the global level. As evidenced by the Kenya Mental Health Policy, estimated that the burden of mental illness is 25% among outpatients and 40% among inpatients in different health facilities. The Ministry of Health is fully committed to ensuring a nation where mental health is valued and promoted despite facing various issues such as:

- **Stigma, discrimination, and social exclusion** - that prevent people from seeking mental health care.
- **Human rights violation of people** with mental and psychological disabilities.
- **Stressful work conditions and environmental** e.g work overload, inflexible work schedules, poor work organization

- **Limited community awareness of mental health**
- **Inadequate investments in mental health** resulting in poor mental health outcomes, shortage of human resource
- **Low socioeconomic status** amongst patients and families with mental illness-people with mental illness lose jobs and shy from looking for jobs because of suffering from mental illness
- **Socio-cultural beliefs and practices** which perpetuate stigma, discrimination, and people not seeking mental health care

Ladies and gentlemen

I wish to state Ministry of Health through collaboration with developmental partners and stakeholders has done various strategies and programmes to bridge the huge gaps in mental health system. The following are some of the prioritized activities and strategies:

- The Ministry had its first Mental Health Investment Case in 2021 with an aim of providing quantified evidence of the long-term health, social and economic benefits of investment in mental health in Kenya. The findings from this investment revealed that mental health condition had a huge economic impact thus investing in mental health would reap huge health, financial and social benefit for the country.
- Implementation of mental health strategies and programmes in efforts towards attaining Universal Health Coverage. The Kenya Mental Health Policy 2015-2030 focuses on the following key objectives:
 - i. To strengthen leadership and governance for mental health from the community level.
 - ii. To implement multisectoral promotive and preventive programmes.
 - iii. To reorganize and transform services to align with the primary healthcare model and Quality Rights standards.
 - iv. To strengthen mental health systems, especially on human resources, information systems, mental healthcare financing and innovative technologies.

Ladies and gentlemen

As I conclude on this important agenda on brain health; I urge you to consider mental health as a cross-cutting matter in the different spheres of life and the urgent need to integrate and mainstream in the different sectors and

programmes. **Together let's make it a necessity to strategically plan and increase investment in mental health.**

I take this opportunity to thank the Aga Khan University Hospital for hosting this conference. As the Ministry of Health, we look forward to working collaboratively with all stakeholders to promote and advance brain health care.

Thank You.