**Intersessional Consultation – Mental Health and Human Rights: HRC/RES/43/13**

**Monday, 15 November 2021 - Monday, 15 November 2021**

**Speaker points: Deputy Director-General, Dr Zsuzsanna Jakab, on behalf of Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, WHO**

* Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,
* In the last two decades, we have witnessed a growing awareness that we need to improve mental health services.
* However, in countries everywhere, whether low-, medium- or high-income countries, the collective response has been inadequate, constrained by a significant lack of investment in mental health as well as outdated legal, policy and service frameworks that fail to align with international human rights standards and requirements.
* The COVID-19 pandemic that we now face has only served to highlight and compound the inadequate and outdated nature of mental health systems and services worldwide.
* It has brought to light the damaging effects of institutions, lack of cohesive social networks, the isolation and marginalization of many individuals with mental health conditions, along with the insufficient and fragmented nature of community mental health services.
* Still today, people lack access to quality services that respond to their needs and respect their rights and dignity.
* In countries everywhere, people continue to be subject to wide-ranging violations and discrimination, including the use of coercive practices, poor and inhuman living conditions, neglect, and in some cases even abuse.
* The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) recognizes the imperative to undertake major reforms to protect and promote human rights in mental health. This is echoed in the Sustainable Development Goals, which call for the promotion of mental health and wellbeing, with human rights at its core, and echoed in the United Nations Political Declaration on universal health coverage.
* If there was ever a time to build and scale-up robust, rights based mental health services, it is now.
* Everywhere, countries need mental health services that adhere to the human rights principles outlined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – including the fundamental rights to equality, non-discrimination, freedom from coercion, violence and abuse, full and effective participation and inclusion in society, and respect for people’s inherent dignity and individual autonomy.
* And I am convinced that there is reason for hope.
* In May this year, at the World Health Assembly, governments collectively and publicly recognized the importance of scaling up access to quality and human rights-based mental health services. They endorsed new options for implementing WHO’s Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan, extended to 2030, and new indicators for measuring progress.
* Furthermore, in June this year, WHO released comprehensive guidance on establishing and scaling up mental health services that are respectful of human rights. The response has been overwhelmingly positive – not only did 7000 people attend the launch online but discussions, webinars and dissemination around this new publication continues unabated among national stakeholders from around the world – a testament to the huge need and appetite for guidance on rights-based mental health services in countries.
* The WHO’s QualityRights initiative also provides critical tools and materials to support countries in undertaking rights-based reform.
  + For example training and guidance materials are available to all countries, providing advice on how to translate human rights principles into concrete mental health practices on the ground.
  + QualityRights service assessment and transformation toolkits enable countries to assess and improve their existing services in line with human rights and quality standards.
  + 23 countries have embarked on QualityRights actions on a grand scale and this number continues to grow.
  + Ghana, an early adopter of this WHO initiative, currently has nearly 34,000 people enrolled on the QualityRights e-training platform, and already 16,900 people have completed the course and been awarded their WHO certificate
  + We are also developing guidance on how to develop and implement mental health policy that aligns with the CRPD.
* And I am also pleased to announce that in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, we are at the early stages of developing new rights-based guidance on mental health related legislation. This will be one of the critical outputs of the high level *Framework of Cooperation* signed in 2017 between WHO and OHCHR and will be an invaluable tool in supporting countries to undertaking rights oriented law reform in this area.
* With sufficient investment in robust mental health policies, laws and systems that respect rights, we can make sure that people in countries everywhere are able to access services that meet their needs and support their recovery.
* I thank my colleague the High Commissioner for Human Rights for holding this important meeting.
* I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the governments of Brazil and Portugal for their unwavering leadership in this crucial area of work in which there remains so much to be done.
* This consultation is testament to the increasing recognition of the urgency to accelerate our collective efforts to build mental health care systems that are fit for purpose, not just for today but also for the future.
* Thank you.