**Oral Statement**

**Human Rights Council Intersessional Meeting**

***Investing in sustainable recovery, advancing gender equality and strengthening partnerships – Towards a renewed social contract anchored in human rights***

**18 January 2022 10:00 – 12:00 CET Virtual Session**

Mr President, Excellencies, distinguished guests,

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and worsened inequalities in our societies.

Achievement of SDG 5 on gender equality and women’s empowerment is being set back by the disproportionate social and economic impact on women and girls, particularly those who face multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage. They are being pushed further into extreme poverty and hunger.

At the same time, we are relying heavily on women during this pandemic: almost 70% of the global health workforce are women. However, when it comes to decision making, a mere 25% of health leadership positions are held by women.

Achievement of SDG 17 is in jeopardy as we witness the gross inequalities in access to COVID-19 diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines. This is the result when collective solidarity on delivering global health goods is undermined by vaccine nationalism.

While many high-income countries are delivering booster shots to their populations, more than 85% of people have yet to receive a single dose in Africa.

Despite our global commitments, we are leaving people behind.

That is why WHO is acting on its commitments in support of its Member States on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls made at the **Generation Equality Forum,** in line with the Secretary-General’s ***Call to Action for Human Rights:*** Ending gender-based violence; advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights; ensuring occupational health and safety for health workers and supporting feminist movements and leadership in health.

And that is why WHO joins the Secretary-General and other UN entities in calling for a renewed commitment to multilateralism and global cooperation to regain progress on SDG17.

We can only achieve these critical SDGs by walking the talk on gender equality, equity and human rights so no one is left behind, and health truly is a reality for everyone everywhere,

Thank you.