Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is a global health policy agenda that has been adopted as one of the health targets of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 3 which is to ‘Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages’. And according to the World Health Organization, this health target states that we should “achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all”.

Zambia’s transformative agenda for inclusive economic growth is premised on successfully ‘Enhancing Human Development’, and the health sector contributes to this pillar of the Seventh National Development Plan 2017-2021 (7NDP) through the provision of quality essential health-care services for the entire population.

Zambia recognizes that the path to move towards achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is a smart investment for any country. Consequently, a predictable and sustainable health care financing mechanism is therefore pivotal to the health system reform if UHC has to be attained. To this effect, Zambia has identified that the establishment of a National Health Insurance (NHI) scheme, as one of the health financing strategies, will assist in ensuring a sustainable, predictable and dedicated financing for the health sector whilst at the same time provide financial risk protection for our citizenry.

The Ministry of Health’s transformational agenda is meant to change the landscape of how we do business. The stated intent has been the attainment of “equity of access to cost-effective quality health services, as close to the family as possible”. We have gone further to state that this vision must be delivered to all corners of Zambia, hence our commitment to the provision of Universal Health Coverage (UHC), through the continuum of care that encompasses health promotion, prevention of disease, quality curative services, palliative and rehabilitative care cannot be over emphasized.

His Excellency the President of Zambia, Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, attaches great importance to health for all ‘without leaving anyone behind’ and after a lengthy consultative process which began in the year 2012, and after various studies taken, the National Health Insurance Bill was finally assented to and is now law in Zambia. This law known as National Health Insurance Act 2 of 2018, therefore responds to the various calls and consensus built with key stakeholders.

The National Health Insurance Scheme model that Zambia will establish is based on the following guiding principles of Universality, Social solidarity, Equity, Affordability, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Accountability.

The National Health Insurance Scheme’s statement of intent is to cover ALL Zambians regardless of their social, economic or employment status and thereby protecting households from the burden of catastrophic health costs through risk pooling. As a funding modality, the National Health Insurance Scheme will also help in supplementing the traditional tax based and donor funding mechanisms in the health sector by providing additional resources in the health sector.

Let me conclude by emphazising that the success of the National Health Insurance Scheme is dependent on the commitment of all the key stakeholders and the ability as a national to together rise up together and focus on ensuring that we have a healthy, productive population and hence a workforce that is key to contributing to the economic landscape of Zambia. By having a nation of healthy and productive people, our goal in the Zambia Vision 2030 of being ‘A Prosperous Middle Income Nation by 2030’ may become a reality rather than just a slogan.

I thank you.

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