Mogadishu, 16 September 2019 – Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in Somalia experienced a significant milestone yesterday when WHO and the Federal Government of Somalia launched the roadmap to UHC for Somali people in a formal ceremony held at the Somali state house today.

The UHC roadmap portrays the strategic framework and medium-term goals for the Somali health sector and was developed jointly by the Somali Ministry of Health and Human Services along with WHO, UN and development partners, civil society organizations and the donor community. The three strategic goals of the UHC roadmap for the period 2019 – 2023 are:

* More Somali people will benefit from universal health coverage
* More Somali people will be better protected from health emergencies
* More Somali people will enjoy better health and well-being

WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari congratulated

the Deputy Prime Minister, H.E. Mahdi Mohamed Gulaid for the government's support for UHC, and praised the Minister for Health and Human Services H.E. Dr Fawziya Abikar Nur for her commitment and leadership in bringing UHC to Somali people. "I am confident that with effective collaboration and partnerships between WHO, the government, and our UN and development partners, we can achieve universal health coverage for Somali people", Dr Al-Mandhari said.

Health systems in Somalia have suffered from continuous emergencies including epidemics of infectious diseases due to prolonged conflict and extreme climatic anomalies such as droughts and floods. Increased population displacement, high levels of malnutrition, lack of access to safe hygiene and sanitation as well as essential health services have all raised the risks to health and well-being.

The launch of the Somali roadmap for UHC was also attended by representatives from UNFPA and UNICEF, ambassadors, cabinet ministers, parliamentarians, and members of civil society. WHO Somalia Country Representative Dr Sk Md Mamunur Rahman Malik emphasised the importance of improving health systems in the country. "The overarching goal of the launch of the universal health care roadmap for Somalia is to build strong and resilient health systems to prevent future disease outbreaks", Dr Malik said.

UHC ensures all individuals and communities receive the health services they need without suffering financial hardship. It includes the full spectrum of essential, quality health services, from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care.

As a fundamental human right, universal health coverage is based on the WHO Constitution of 1948, and the Health for All agenda set by the Alma-Ata Declaration of 1978. It is also entrenched in the 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals on good health and well-being, which was accepted unanimously by world leaders and includes Health for All – a commitment to take concrete steps to advance the health of all people.

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