

(Through interpreter.) Thank you; Ms. Secretary of State of the United States; Ms. Margaret Chan, director of the World Health Organization; Mr. Rajiv Shah, head of USAID; ministers of health of Ethiopia and India, ministers of health and dear colleagues, distinguished guests. It's not very easy to follow up on a very popular gentleman such as Ben Affleck; however, I'd like to extend my most sincere thanks to him for the positive image of DRC that he presented, because it is true. In my country there are positive things that should be mentioned.

I'd like to thank the organizers of this forum and the United States for having invited DRC to participate in this forum. I will discuss three important points in my presentation. First of all, the situation, the status of DRC. Second, the challenges to be met. Third, the opportunities and the – to be seized in the health sector. And I shall end with a brief conclusion.

Before I speak of the status and the criteria that we'll give you, the indicators are in the red zone, but allow me to follow in the footsteps of Ben Affleck by starting discussing something very positive about DRC. The situation of the polio virus was declared in December 2011. Last year, at the same period, we had registered in DRC over 43 cases of polio. But for the first semester of 2012, we've noted no polio virus started the first semester of 2012 in my country. And we think that we will be able to eradicate the polio virus in the Democratic Republic of Congo. (Applause.)

Let's discuss now the situation of these things in DRC. My country is the largest country in the central part of Africa and let me give you some numbers. We have – we organize in medical districts and there are 515 altogether, and 238 of these districts receive support. We have 422 primary hospitals, but there're still 125 districts that do not have such hospitals. Out of 854 medical health centers, only 1,546 have been built so far. And a few numbers now: the mortality rate is 97 per 1,000. So these are for children that are less than one year old. So for children that are less than 5 years old, we're talking 150 per 1,000, and that represents 230 deaths per hour. In other words, this is four deaths per minute. Since I've talking here, eight children have died. And 559 per 1,000 that's the death rate for women.

And an independent study just revealed that 2.4 million children have died in this manner, and in DRC, we're talking 640,000. Thanks to UNICEF, GAVI Alliance, we've increased our vaccine rate, but it is still insufficient. And we have campaigns now organized to fight measles. Malnutrition is on the rise in my country, but our government intends to invest heavily in agriculture because we have 80 million hectares of arable land.

Amongst the diseases that are mostly responsible for child mortality, you have pneumonia and other respiratory diseases which represent 19 percent. That's why I welcome the introduction of the anti-pneumonia vaccine in DRC. Malaria represents another 18 percent. And thanks to the help from the United States, we are waging a campaign to have nets to counter this scourge. And diarrhea represents another 13 percent, while lack of accessibility to drinkable water.

What are the challenges we have to meet? First of all, we should strive to reduce the numbers of children and mothers deaths. So right now we're talking 148 deaths per 1,000. By 2015, we strive to get below the three digits, in other words, below 100, but we want to do even

more than that. This means that we need extra resources. As I said earlier, we have 515 medical districts and only 438 of them receive the proper support. We should strive to have all 515 fully-functionable. We have to restore and build new infrastructure. And we have to increase the diagnostic support, material support, and general support and get people to have greater access to essential medication.

We have other challenges. We want to get a lot more people vaccinated and my country is implementing a program to revitalize systematic vaccination. And we believe that through this increased vaccination program, we can fully eradicate the polio virus in DRC. And as Ben Affleck mentioned earlier, we need to beef up security in Eastern Congo, so as to put an end to the war there, and we need the support for that of the United States and other countries.

And 80 percent of our people are in poverty. That is why we need greater universal health coverage and health insurance.

Another challenge is to increase the health budget and communities should get further involved in vaccination and tackling health issues related to children and mothers. What are the opportunities on which we should capitalize in DRC? Democracy, we have a national health development plan and we have these qualified personnel that we should disseminate throughout the country.

DRC government is committed – so number one, increase the budget for health. We were at 1.2, but this year we've gone up to 7 percent. And we have to pay our counterparts to fund the sector through and through. Three, guarantee good governance. We want to – four – adopt a program and a roadmap for the five upcoming years. So we are committed to eradicate polio and to coordinate all the different entities involved in this process.

I will conclude by reasserting the commitment of the DRC. We want to reduce child mortality and we want to follow up on a calendar – and focusing on the health of the mother because the latter is so intimately linked to children's health.

In conclusion, I will say that it is possible. I know that Obama – President Obama said: “Yes, we can.” And I think that yes, we can, also where my country is concerned. (Applause.)