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Meeting of the State Commissioners of Health with Federal MDAs and Development Partners

The Director General of NGF, Mr Asishana Okauru Speech

Protocol

I would like to congratulate the Health Commissioners’ Forum for putting together this all-important event that brings together the Honourable Commissioners of Health, Health Secretary FCT, Federal Health MDAs and development partners working in the health sector to discuss contemporary issues in the health sector of the country.

As a platform that brings together all the 36 state governors and whose overall strategy is anchored on collaborative action and peer learning, we believe that this meeting is critical at this time.

The Nigeria Governors’ Forum is already the leading platform for subnational discourse, regional cooperation and integration, and one of the foremost subnational bodies in Africa.

The NGF Secretariat is the technical and administrative arm of the Forum. It is a policy hub and one-stop resource centre across the key sectors crucial to National development.

As a custodian of records for the subnational government, the Secretariat has a robust repository of resources relevant to the states, federal MDAs and partners and I hereby invite you to visit the NGF Library to access such resources.

The Secretariat also has a pool of experts in Health, Agriculture, the Economy, Education and Security who work to catalyse strategic alignment of states with national priorities as guided by the strategic plan of the Forum.

The priorities in health include the acceleration of the **attainment of Universal Health Coverage, improving nutrition especially of women and under-five children**, strengthening routine immunization and domestication of the National Action Plan on Health Security.

Over the years, the NGF Secretariat has maintained a deep engagement with National and State MDAs as well as partners. The Honourable Commissioners of Health are central to this engagement which is why the secretariat is excited to be present at this meeting.

As part of our commitment, health has become a permanent agenda at the monthly meetings of the NGF where Governors are updated on priority health issues, utilizing advocacy tools such as scorecards and state specific briefs. These updates amongst other achievements helped maintain Governors’ commitment to Polio eradication efforts which subsequently led to Nigeria being declared polio-free in 2020. Similarly, we have seen a phenomenal rise in the number of states with State Health Insurance Agencies, a development that we are proud to attribute to the strategic advocacy that we have employed.

We have also seen progress in the implementation of the Primary Healthcare Under One Roof Policy as all states now have State Primary Healthcare Boards. Governors have also committed to further strengthening Primary Health Care System through their Seattle Declaration. More recently, the health team of the Secretariat has anchored the subnational coordination of the COVID19 pandemic response, which has been critical in fostering a single national COVID-19 pandemic response.

The Secretariat has also been working on health financing, which is a major challenge to the sustainability of health interventions. The Secretariat is therefore conceptualizing a Tax for Service model as a mechanism for handling the health financing issues at the subnational level. We hope to invite the Commissioners of Health to a Peer Learning Event in a few weeks where this will be discussed extensively.

As I conclude, I want to appreciate all the Federal MDAs and development partners who have been supporting the strengthening of the States’ health systems. We look forward to the resolutions at the end of this meeting. Please be assured that the NGF Secretariat will follow up on its commitment as partners for transforming the health system in Nigeria.

I wish you all a very successful deliberation.