

SPEECH BY HON. DR MOHAMED ABDI KUTI EGH MP, MINISTER FOR LIVESTOCK DEVELOPMENT DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE ZOO NOTIC DISEASE UNIT AT PANAFRIC HOTEL ON OCTOBER 3RD 2012.

**The Minister for Public Health and Sanitation, Hon. Beth Mugo,
The Assistant Minister for Public Health and Sanitation,
Parmanent Secretary, Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation,
Ag. Parmanent Secretary, Ministry of Livestock Development,
The United States of America Deputy Chief of Mission, H.E Mr Isaiah Parnell,
Representatives of development partners (The US Department of State, The US Department of Defense and The Center for Disease Control and Prevention),
Representatives of implementing partners (FAO, WHO, OIE)
Directors of all represented institutions,
Heads of Departments,
Distinguished guests,**

Ladies and gentlemen

Today marks a very significant day in Kenya's calendar as we congregate to celebrate the actualization of what has been termed as "One Health Concept" for a long period.

Universally, health is defined by World Health Organization as "The state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". This means that inorder to achieve this wellness, the collaborative efforts of multiple disciplines working locally, nationally and globally to attain optimal health for human, animals and our environment need to be embraced.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Even though the phrase “One Health” is new, I would like to mention that the precepts of “One Health” date back to the Hippocrates’ period (460 – 370 BC) who associated public health with a clean environment. However, even as the One Health concept lived on, practitioners in the medical domains tended to specialize more and more, and ended up marginalizing its precepts thus rendering the approaches to management of public health problems less inclusive and unsustainable.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Livestock production plays a crucial role in the economy of this country both at the National and house hold levels. Kenya houses enormous number of livestock population ranging to tune of 18million cattle, 18million Sheep, 28million goats, 3 million camels, 32million chickens and about 2million donkeys. This therefore means that this country has the correct and adequate hosts for Zoonotic pathogens; bearing in mind that about 60% of all human pathogens and 75% of emerging/ re-emerging diseases are zoonotic in nature.

Out of all the agricultural commodities, livestock production contributes to about 12% of gross domestic product (GDP) and 30% of the farm gate value. In view of this, interaction between humans, animals and the environment is dictated by very complex dynamics including animal trade, wildlife hunting/consumption, human encroachment into new ecosystems, intensification of animal husbandry and farming, hence providing specific high risk interfaces.

This therefore means that management of the risks occasioned by these complex interactions require an integrated approach with increased communication, collaboration, and cooperation across a wide variety of disciplines.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In many occasions, the many zoonotic diseases have been viewed as of importance only when humans are affected yet animals are hosts to these diseases. This therefore means that the most effective control route is by ensuring that the disease has been managed in animals. Lack of adequate collaboration between human and animal health has affected the efficiency and effectiveness of controlling zoonotic diseases in the country. This has further been compounded by the under-funded veterinary and medical sectors, hence causing each of the sectors to hope that the other will deal with the problem.

Recent public health events characterized by various epidemics/pandemics of zoonotic diseases; like Rift Valley Fever, Anthrax and Rabies have influenced the need for greater collaboration among human and animal health domains, and broader understanding of the ecosystem in addressing public health problems.

This kind of set up results in more rapid and better coordinated response in management of epidemics and consequently there is less morbidity and mortality in both humans and animals.

In developing a system that addresses issues of livestock diseases (including zoonotic diseases) and other related health events, My Ministry has aimed to build on past successes, take cognizance of the many and complex challenges facing the improvement of livestock sector and transform these into opportunities that take into account a strategic niche and comparative advantage of coordinated perspective in public health.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the One Health movement has gained momentum globally, One Health approach has gained a lot of support in Kenya; and Kenya has been working since 2006 to institutionalize One Health approaches in public health management. Through clear understanding of the impact of collaboration, a Kenya One Health office called the Zoonotic Disease Unit (which we are launching today) was established between My Ministry and the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation in the year 2011. The main objective of this Unit is to establish and maintain active collaboration at the animal, human, and ecosystem interface towards better prevention and control of zoonotic diseases.

The Unit has already demonstrated its utility, as it recently responded to reported cases of Human African Trypanosomiasis among tourists visiting one of Kenya's national parks and has initiated surveillance of brucellosis in the country.

Successful zoonoses control requires four main elements; a legal framework, a policy framework, institutional structures and a programme implementation plan. My Ministry is working objectively and is glad to bridge the gaps that have existed in each of the elements in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation, plus other implementing and development partners. In partial fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Vision 2030, we have mandated the Zoonotic Disease Unit to concentrate on actions that promote health (human, animal and environment) through implementation of the strategic plan that we are launching today; hence promoting food security and reduction of extreme poverty.

This strategic plan elaborates the process by which this implementation will be achieved mainly by strengthening surveillance, prevention, and control of zoonotic diseases, establishment of structures and partnerships to promote One Health approaches as well as conducting research at the human-animal-ecosystem interface.

On the other hand, My Ministry is in the process of developing the Veterinary policy and issues of One Health have been included to ensure adequate harnessing within the existing veterinary framework.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The establishment of this One Health Unit therefore, reflects our shared commitment to enhanced collaboration between animal and human health to reduce the burden of zoonotic diseases.

To realize our common vision and objectives, we need to embrace and support this Kenya One Health program, the Zoonotic Disease Unit, in the already existing frameworks.

Finally, **Ladies and Gentlemen,** I would specifically wish to acknowledge the enormous support that we have received from The U.S Department of State; The U.S Department of Defense and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in the establishment of this One Health in the two Ministries. We look forward to stronger collaboration with you and all the other partners represented here today.

With these remarks, I would like to sincerely thank you all for being part of this One Health initiative.

Thank you all.