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**የጠቅላይ ሚኒስትር ጽሕፈት ቤት**  
Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia  
**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER**

Excellencies Heads of State and Government,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

**ጤና ይስጥልኝ!**

It is a great honor to be among you this morning.

**ጤና ይስጥልኝ** is how we greet in Amharic... it means “May you be granted health”. Through this greeting, our ancestors have ingrained the essence of health and wellbeing in our daily lives.

And therefore, in continuity of our ancestors well wishes for health, I would like to raise some key issues on healthcare with you today. Ensuring quality health care to citizens is a fundamental objective of any government. While there is no doubt that universal health coverage is an ambitious goal, it is nevertheless a necessary one. Here in Ethiopia, we have witnessed tremendous improvement in access, when we introduced universal primary health care to all our citizens.

Today each of our 17,000 villages are linked by a national network of more than 40,000 health extension workers. While there are still some miles left in reaching our health sector reform goals, the impacts to date have been profound! It is no coincidence that in 2012, Ethiopia achieved its Millennium Development Goal target of reducing the under-fives mortality rate by two-thirds - three years ahead of the deadline. Life expectancy has also increased from 52 at the turn of the millennium, to 65 by the year 2016.

Our ambitions drive our efforts!  
Yet necessity gives us little choice.

Several countries in Africa have universal health care coverage as an overarching social provision. Yet only 3 of the 55 African Union members are currently able to dedicate 15% of their GDP to health coverage, as per the Abuja Declaration. It is still critical that we encourage new and innovative sources of financing to supplement budgetary support and development assistance in the health sector. Greater attention should also be given to improving efficiency in domestic health spending.

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Access to affordable and quality healthcare is a key driver of economic development. And governments have played a significant role in the past in making quality healthcare accessible.

However, the private sector should also play a vital role in both financing and supporting implementation of national health plans. Investing in the health sector is rewarding and is indeed part of corporate social responsibility.

In my view, Public Private Partnerships offer an easy entry point for sustainable health financing. This method, also referred to as “private finance initiative” is a method which in Ethiopia we are taking concrete and practical steps towards.

We recently enacted a new legal framework on Public Private Partnerships, which includes the health sector, and has provisions to enable transparency, fairness and long-term sustainability in this method of engagement. For instance, the Ministry of Health together with the Ministry of Finance is piloting a high-end and innovative diagnostic Public Private Partnership investment in two government owned hospitals---Black Lion and Saint Peter.

Our main objective in this regard is to reduce health care costs by encouraging private sector operators to centralize service delivery, assuring quality coverage.

Another important focus area and investment opportunity for private investors is tertiary level medical services. These services are expected to attract medical tourism and reduce the outflow of patients in search of high-end health care services abroad.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We need to make the health sector our priority!

We must capitalize on Public Private Partnership modalities in healthcare and recognize that they rely heavily on political will and require a great deal of interdependence between the government and private operators. We have to do our part to ensure the success of our collaborative efforts.

Finally, I want to stress that our aspiration to ensure universal access to health care should not compromise quality.

Our citizens deserve quality health care, regardless of age, gender and geographical location.

Currently, a large number of Africans do not have access to see a medical doctor in their lifetime. This must change!

If ‘leave no-one behind’ is a mantra for achieving the SDGs, then achieving universal health coverage is vital to ensure that Africa is not left behind.

I thank you!

**ጤና ይስጥልኝ!**