Closing Statement by the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Health, at the end of the 2-day Seminar on Person-Centered Care held in Seychelles on the 15th and 16th July 2016

We have done a lot of work during the past few days. More than you would even imagine!

Dr. Delanyo Dovlo, the Director for Health Systems and Services at the WHO Regional Office for Africa, arrived in Seychelles in the middle of the week and, immediately after, he held three meetings with us. First he met with the Minister of Health, then he met with the technical and management team of the Ministry and subsequently, with the management team of the Health Care Agency.

The meetings, naturally, revolved around strengthening of the health system and health services in Seychelles to sustain universal health coverage and to improve health care quality, in the context of our current health challenges.

We also discussed the specificities of small island states and how Seychelles and other small territories in the Indian and Atlantic Oceans can take advantage of the opportunity provided by the creation of a Support Desk for Small Island Developing States at the Regional Office of WHO African Region,
to promote their common agenda. We agreed that the Small Island Developing States of the WHO AFRO region should be widened to possibly include territories like Zanzibar and even the Maldives, which are currently not part of it.

On the eve of the symposium, the steering Committee, which includes the local organizers and the facilitators met to coordinate the details of the symposium. We have had two such meetings so far and we expect to have a brief, final one later today.

Yesterday, on the first day of our symposium, we were initiated to the global and regional issues surrounding person-centered care, by Dr. Nuria Toro and Dr. Delanyo Dovlo. Later, we received a wealth of information from our esteemed facilitators, Dr. Susan Frampton and Dr. Angela Coulter, two of the best person-centered care specialists in the World. They guided us eloquently through the theory and practice of person-centered care while Seychelles shared its modest experience on the topic through the speech delivered by the Minister, the observations of the World Health Organization Liaison Officer in Seychelles, the presentation by the Principal Secretary for Health and the comments from the participants. Throughout the symposium, those participant-comments were rich, thought-provoking and really demonstrating of the understanding of the issues around person-centered care and the opportunities and the challenges ahead.
Today, on the second day of the Symposium, we began with a recap of yesterday’s work. Subsequently the facilitators, Dr. Coulter and Dr. Frampton, guided us through some of the enablers and barriers to person-centered care whilst Dr. Dovlo focused on the governance framework and the legal and regulatory issues we need to address, in order to accomplish the vision, of putting the person at the centre of his/her own care.

The deliberations on the Seychelles Charter for Health which followed, demonstrated, as we expected, that there is still a lot of work for us to do on the Charter. There appears to be agreement that the Seychelles Charter for Health is a worthwhile endeavour and that it should be part and parcel of the total policy framework for health in Seychelles. There appeared also, to be agreement, that wider and deeper consultation on its structure and content should continue so as to ensure that the people of Seychelles really take ownership of that document and, as the custodian of that document, that the people of Seychelles really convert it into a living, breathing instrument for all actions in health. As participants, you demanded mechanisms to ensure dissemination of the document, mechanisms to ensure its implementation as well as mechanisms to measure (i.e. monitor and evaluate) accomplishments. There were a number of areas which they suggested needed reconsideration or rewording. The Ministry of Health has taken due note of all the suggestions. Finally, while discussing the charter, we got a lesson from the Representative of the Health Professionals Council on the need to say what we mean and to mean what we say. From today onwards, each time a person tells us to raise our hands, I am pretty sure none of us will dare to raise our “arms”.
The World Café, introduced and guided by Nuria Toro, provided us with a further opportunity to look beyond the theory of person centered care to its practice. As a result of that exercise and your compelling contribution, we now have a set of concrete proposals on which we can begin to work, and shape our actions to transform our place of work into a really person-centered milieu that is pleasant, for both staff and patient.

Dear colleagues, take it from me: The Ministry of Health is determined, determined to put in place the necessary mechanisms to ensure that a much higher degree of person-centered care becomes a reality in Seychelles. Next year at this time we must, and I am pretty sure we shall, see real examples of visible change.

I would like to leave you with two quotes. The first is from Maya Angelou, the great American Poet, who once said: *People will forget. They will forget what you said to them and forget what you did to them but they will never forget how you made them feel.* Let’s begin by making our patients feel the same way we would like to feel if we were in their same situation.

On the other side of the world, the great Indian thinker, Mahatma Gandhi once said: *“Be the the change that you want to see.”*

In my book, these two quotes epitomize everything we have been doing and saying for the past 48 hours.
On behalf of the Ministry, I would like to thank our guests, the facilitators, from my heart of hearts. It was clear that for you, person-centered care is a passion and you were able to transmit that passion to all of us.

To Susan, who is travelling tonight, have a great flight home. To Angela, who is staying on, enjoy the rest of your stay in Seychelles. To Delanyo and Nuria, who will be leaving soon, thank you again.

To the staff of the Ministry and others, I thank you all for attending this extremely informative symposium. I thank you for turning up in so large numbers and I thank you for the immense dedication that you put to your work, every day.

Have a great weekend. With this I declare the symposium, officially closed.

I thank you.