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INTERNATIONAL ADOLESCENT HEALTH WEEK CELEBRATION 2021 ORGANIZED BY THE NIGERIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION ON TUESDAY, MARCH 23, 2021

--Remarks by the Chairman of the occasion, Dr. Osahon Enabulele, President of Commonwealth Medical Association.

PROTOCOL!

The international Adolescent Health Week is a week that has been globally celebrated for a couple of years now, particularly on account of the need to address the needs of our precious Adolescents and to effectively provide for their transition to Adulthood.

It is in this light that I consider as apt the choice of the theme for this year's international Adolescent Health Week: "Adolescent Resilience in the face of the pandemic. I equally appreciate the choice of the subtheme: "Sexual Assault: A Broader Perspective."

Both the theme and subtheme deserve deep reflections, if the needs and challenges of Adolescents must be addressed, particularly contemporary challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The increasing disparities and inequities caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the conditions of people of various age groups, including Adolescents who constitute a significant proportion of the global population, and most of whom live in Low- and Middle-Income countries where these disparities and inequities are more prominent.

Though Adolescents are said to be at low risk of COVID-19 infection, we have seen globally, that both younger and older Adolescent age groups have been severely affected by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly measures taken to contain the pandemic. These measures, especially the lockdown containment measures, have led to severe disruptions in their ability to gain access to essential healthcare services (including routine immunizations and family planning services) and social services, with severe disruptions in their education. It has been reported that about 1.6 billion students in virtually all countries of the world had their education severely disrupted.

Another consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic is the reported increase in the incidence of sexual assault, particularly sexual assault of Adolescents. This unfortunate development has worsened the level of Adolescent sexual abuse whose burden and prevalence has been on an upward swing across the various regions of the world, in recent times.

In the light of the foregoing, it is my hope that activities, lectures and panel discussions lined up for the week will help to generate a strong consensus on some practical and effective strategies for addressing the needs and challenges of Adolescents.

Some recommendations:

(1) There is need for sustained sensitization and advocacy on the peculiar needs of Adolescents, with strong commitment of governments and the global community secured on the issues that concern Adolescents.

(2) Governments across the world need to ensure sustained provision of essential social and healthcare services to Adolescents, promote research on Adolescent issues, and enforce deterrent legislations to prevent and eliminate Adolescent sexual abuse.

(3) There is also a strong need for moral rearmament and ethical re-orientation with restoration of family values.

I pray that no Adolescent is left behind in the conversations and process of solution seeking and implementation of agreed strategies to address the needs and challenges of Adolescents.

I thank the organizers for according me the privilege to chair this occasion.

I wish everyone an impactful International Adolescent Health Week 2021.



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