**Opening Remarks by Dr. Abbi Kedir, Director of Research, AERC at the Inter-Ministerial Policy Dialogue Meeting**

**Taj Pamodzi Hotel, Lusaka, Zambia | June 17-20, 2024**

Minister of Health, Zambia

Permanent Secretaries, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance and National Planning, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development

USAID Mission, Zambia

Palladium Group

Distinguished participants

All protocol observed

Good morning,

On behalf of AERC, it is a great honor to welcome you all to this Inter-Ministerial Policy Dialogue Meeting on strengthening primary health care financing in Zambia, between the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Finance and National Planning and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. On behalf of PROPEL Health and the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC), I extend my heartfelt appreciation for your presence and participation.

Our gathering here underscores a shared commitment to improving primary healthcare financing and service delivery. The collaboration between the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Finance and National Planning and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development is vital for developing and implementing policies that ensure sustainable and equitable health services. PROPEL Health, implemented by Palladium in collaboration with AERC and other partners, aims to enhance the enabling environment for health services through policy development, sustainable health financing, government stewardship, and evidence-based advocacy. Our focus areas include family planning, reproductive health, primary healthcare, and the integration of HIV and maternal and child health services.

AERC's role in this project leverages our extensive network of think tanks and universities across Africa. We are dedicated to strengthening the capacity of policy researchers and decision-makers, facilitating policy dialogues, and ensuring that evidence informs health policy decisions. Our goal is to support researchers, PROPEL country teams, and government representatives in translating evidence into actionable policy recommendations.

This Inter-Ministerial Policy Dialogue Meeting aims to foster a participatory approach and localize practical solutions for resource mobilization, allocation, and efficient utilization. Our discussions will focus on enhancing collaboration, synergy, and alignment of resources between the ministries to improve health outcomes through adequate, predictable, and sustainable financing of primary healthcare. The policy dialogues we engage in today are critical for identifying challenges in resource planning and budgeting. They will facilitate agreements to expedite the release of allocated funds, track utilization, and enhance efficiency, accountability, and transparency of primary healthcare spending.

PROPEL Health through AERC has previously convened Inter -Ministerial Policy Dialogues in Kenya (August-September 2023) and Botswana (April 2024). The dialogues have provided insights on the opportunities, challenges and risks that face the primary health care financing space. PROPEL Health and AERC are confident that the outcomes of our discussions will lead to the co-creation and launch of a collaborative framework between the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance and National Planning and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. This framework is essential for strengthening primary healthcare financing and health service delivery, ultimately propelling better health outcomes in Zambia.

In closing, I thank you all for your dedication and contributions to this crucial dialogue. Let us work together to ensure that our efforts result in meaningful and lasting improvements in healthcare for our communities.

Thank you.