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**“10 years of Leadership in Global Health  
Farewell to Margaret Chan”  
Geneva, June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

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Remarks by **Tania Dussey-Cavassini**,  
Vice-Director General of the Federal Office of Public Health,  
Ambassador for Global Health

**« From breakthrough to breakthrough »**

*Check against delivery*

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear colleagues, Dear Friends,

Speaking last is always the worst. What is to be said, when all words haven been spoken?

It is my great honor, on behalf of Switzerland to bid good-bye to the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr. Margaret Chan, and express my country's deepest gratitude for all her work, more importantly for who she is as a woman leader.

Dear Margaret,

When pondering on your many achievements, when researching and reading on your milestones in Global Health from 2007 to 2017, I thought of an illustration that would best describe your hard work and relentless commitment to Global Health. If it were a painting, its title would be:

***From Breakthrough to breakthrough***

Your host country, Switzerland is known for many things. It was also born as a country that connected North with South, and East to West. Trades' routes and alpine passes forged Switzerland. Later on, how these trades' routes would be enhanced would define us. It took the leap of faith of a few to dig the first tunnels through the Swiss Alps in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, the vision to enhance these at the turn of this millennium, and shape transportation through Europe by safeguarding our landscapes, demanded a different set of advocacy skills. It is a long-term vision based on the principles of sustainability that drove this investment.

Dear Margaret,

Did you know that two very important construction works were completed during your reign in Switzerland?

In June 2007, six months after the start of your decade of work at WHO, the Lötschberg Base Tunnel was inaugurated. This Tunnel together with the century-old Simplon Rail Tunnel completed the western railway route through the Bernese Alps.

A year ago, the Gotthard Base Tunnel was opened after 17 years of work. It is the longest and deepest railway traffic tunnel in the world (57 km). This work completed the vision of reducing environmental damage that was caused by the ever-increasing amount of freight hauled by heavy trucks. Reducing environmental damage and choosing sustainability meant forcing traffic to move from roads to railways.

These two tunnels illustrate best the way you worked throughout this decade in global health, **“from breakthrough to breakthrough”**:

Your first breakthrough was to put the principles and approaches of **Primary Health Care** back on track.

In increasing access to affordable medicines, you never were sidetracked by people-versus-profits issues. No, you relentlessly continued to dig deeper to find a solution.

When setting a shared global health agenda for the 194 countries, you always knew what you were aiming for. When hitting rocks, if facing roadblocks, you continued to engage, with integrity, in the Latin meaning of the word, by bringing all of yourself into the room.

You did not let yourself be defeated by contentious technical issues. In your mind, there was always light at the end of the tunnel, in your own words, by “putting faith in the people and trust in the evidence” of the construction work that – yes, indeed - it can be done, against all odds.

Your second great breakthrough that shaped this current decade is the promotion and protection of Health by enhancing the health systems financing and establishing the path to **Universal Health Coverage**. You claimed Universal Health Coverage as a sustainable mean to reducing social inequalities and increasing health equity.

Eradicating polio, defending health for all and health in all policies, fighting antimicrobial resistance, enhancing the implementation of the International Health Regulations, accelerating vaccines programs, supporting the set up of the Global Health Security Agenda, adopting a new health emergencies program to counter pandemic threats and the health consequences of humanitarian crisis, fighting neglected tropical diseases, advocating for the health of migrants, calling all countries to care for mental health and offer a public health response to dementia, these are just some of the walls you broke through.

From breakthrough to breakthrough, not necessarily with explosives, often with a soft spoken voice and the firm determination of a convinced drill. Your vast toolbox would often take delegates by surprise. And thanks to that toolbox, the causes you defended prevailed.

Dear Margaret,

You leave this Organization better equipped with a strong compass of people centered care, through primary health care and universal health coverage.

From the Lötschberg Tunnel to the Gotthard Tunnel,

From breakthrough to breakthrough,

Through passion and determination,

You put us all back on the right track to achieve Global Health.

Thank you, Margaret.