

Stakeholders commit to work together towards universal health care for all Africans

Brazzaville, 28 June 2017 – The World Health Organization’s inaugural Africa Health Forum has concluded with a resounding call to action that all stakeholders in Africa must work together to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC), a key aim of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Experts from a wide range of backgrounds including academics, ministers of health, intergovernmental agencies, academics, civil society, philanthropic foundations, private sector, and youth organisations attended the two-day landmark event organized by WHO under the theme: ‘Putting people first: The Road to Universal Health Coverage in Africa.’

“We recognise that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides an opportunity to reposition primary prevention in health service delivery and also provides an ideal platform for catalysing inter-sectoral engagement and action. It also calls for stronger collaboration and engagement among all stakeholders behind the goal of achieving UHC, while leaving no one behind,” stated Dr Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa.

Discussions at the event have acknowledged the progress in health made over the past years but also recognised the need to address ‘old enemies’ such as HIV, TB and malaria and the new threats presented by non-communicable diseases and climate change. They placed emphasis on the need for strong health systems to ensure public health security, including better preparedness and response to disease outbreaks and epidemics. With a growing young population in Africa, delegates also underscored the importance of investing in adolescent health now as it provides a real opportunity for full realization of the demographic dividend.

In response to this, participants at the Africa Health Forum, individually and collectively have committed to some key aims (amongst others):

- Keeping UHC as the overarching approach for attaining SDG3 in order to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages;
- Sustaining strong political will and commitment, increasing and sustaining domestic and external financial contributions and investments in health, including establishing innovative financing mechanisms, ensuring value for money and increased accountability;
- Building, re-orienting and re-aligning health systems towards UHC, with a emphasis on primary health care, and maintaining effective systems to ensure improved financial protection and affordability for the most vulnerable populations, including women, children and the youth while intensifying focus on quality and equity;
- Strengthening health workforce development and sustainability, including community health workers, to deliver quality health services;
- Empowering people, including the youth, with the information, skills and resources that will enable them to actively engage in health policy development and maintain healthy environments, improve health literacy thereby making effective decisions about their own health and that of their families and communities;
- Placing stronger focus on building national core capacities for the International Health Regulations, including outbreak and emergency preparedness and active engagement of communities, while mobilizing strategic partners within and beyond the health sector to address the social and environmental determinants that influence vulnerability related to health emergencies;

- Establishing well-coordinated multisectoral regional emergency mechanisms and teams to support countries for prompt response to outbreaks and other health emergencies supplementing national capacities when needed;
- Strengthening advocacy and national capacity for health research, including setting the agenda; improving infrastructure, regulatory mechanisms and human capacity for the generation, analysis, synthesis and use of research and other health data, and mobilizing the required funding;
- Promoting, through partnerships, the use of new technologies, including innovative eHealth solutions to support the attainment of UHC;
- Establishing well-coordinated multisectoral monitoring and progress-tracking mechanisms to promote efficiency and accountability in delivering on key health-related commitments to achieve concrete results towards attainment of UHC;
- Call upon Government to provide leadership and stewardship for actions aimed at creating consultative planning platforms and regulatory frameworks for the attainment of UHC;
- Call upon Government to increase domestic investments; mobilize and coordinate all stakeholders for a common purpose; forge partnerships with bilateral and multilateral agencies, the private sector and civil society; and monitor and report progress;

The event which was opened by Rt. Honourable Anastase Murekezi, the Prime Minister of Rwanda, attracted over 700 delegates WHO AFRO plans to establish it as a biennial platform to engage key stakeholders in reviewing progress towards the health-related SDGs.

To read the full **Call to Action**, please visit:

www.africahealthforum.afro.who.int or

www.afro.who.int

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Our goal is to build a better, healthier future for people all over the world. As the lead health authority within the United Nations system in more than 150 countries, WHO staff work side by side with governments and other partners to ensure the highest attainable level of health for all people.

Together we strive to combat diseases – infectious diseases like influenza and HIV and noncommunicable ones like cancer and heart disease. We help mothers and children survive and thrive so they can look forward to a healthy old age. We ensure the safety of the air people breathe, the food they eat, the water they drink, and the medicines and vaccines they need.