

AFRICAN UNION HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT DECLARATION

‘BUILDING MOMENTUM FOR ROUTINE IMMUNIZATION RECOVERY IN AFRICA’

We, the African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government attending the high-level side event on “*Building momentum for routine immunization recovery in Africa*”, held on 19th February 2023 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia during the 36th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union.

RECALLING previous declarations, resolutions, and frameworks, including, inter alia:

- The African Heads of State and Government endorsement of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan as the framework for African people to have access to essential, quality, safe and effective medical products, and technologies (2012),
 - The Immunize Africa 2020 Abuja Declaration endorsed by African Heads of State and Government (2014),
 - The Heads of State and Government Declaration on Polio Eradication in Africa: “Our Historic Legacy to Future Generations” (2015),
 - The World Health Assembly resolution (WHA68.6) on the Global Vaccine Action Plan (2015),
 - The Addis Ababa Declaration on universal immunization coverage as the cornerstone for health and development in Africa (2016),
 - The Declaration of Astana Global Conference on Primary Health Care – From Alma-Ata towards universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals (2018)
 - The Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (2018),
 - The framework for implementation of the Immunization Agenda 2030 in the WHO African Region (AFR/RC71/7, 2021)
 - The Framework for Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus (HDPN) of the WHO-EMRO Region (2021),
 - The Declaration of the 15th Extraordinary African Union Humanitarian Summit and Pledging Conference (Malabo, 2022,)
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COMMITTED to increase domestic and external investments in immunization programmes in Africa and consequently to promote, provide, and protect health as well as to empower, partner, and perform health for all the people in Africa;

ACKNOWLEDGING that, socio-economic growth in Africa is dependent on a healthy population; and that resilient health system are required for strong immunization programs that help to achieve universal health coverage;

REAFFIRMING that eradicating, eliminating, and reducing vaccine-preventable diseases will improve overall health and wellbeing, empower future generations, and allow every person to achieve their full potential;

RECOGNIZING that the target for universal access to immunization by 2020, as endorsed under the Global Vaccination Action Plan (GVAP) was not achieved;

COGNISANT that a global immunization strategy -the Immunization Agenda 2030 (IA2030) was endorsed by the Seventy-third World Health Assembly - WHA (decision 73 (9));

NOTING that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused deepfelt devastation to the lives and livelihoods of communities, put health systems under enormous pressure, extensively disrupted essential health services, including routine immunization resulting in outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases;

CONVINCED that there is an urgent need to revitalise routine immunisation programmes and to establish a coordinated continental mechanism to prepare for and effectively respond to vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks.

COMMENDING the Commission and its organs, the WHO, and other relevant partners for convening this high-level side event;

RESOLVE AND COMMIT OUR GOVERNMENTS TO:

- (1) Revitalise the momentum for all populations to have universal access to immunization to reduce mortality, morbidity, and disability, and consequently help Member States to achieve their health SDGs and economic and development goals.
- (2) Increase and sustain domestic investments and funding allocations, including diversifying financing mechanisms to meet the cost of traditional vaccines, fulfill new vaccine financing requirements, and to provide adequate financial, logistical, and human resources to support the operational implementation of

routine immunization programmes.

- (3) Urgently address persistent bottlenecks in vaccine and healthcare delivery systems, especially in the poorest, vulnerable, and most marginalized communities, including strengthening data collection, collation, reporting and use of digital tools at all levels, effective, and efficient logistics management systems and integrated procurement supply chain management systems.
- (4) Increase the effectiveness and efficiency of immunization delivery systems as an integral part of building and sustaining resilient primary health care systems.
- (5) Attain and maintain high quality surveillance for all vaccine preventable diseases to monitor progress towards eradication, elimination, and control goals, as well as to detect early and promptly respond to outbreaks.
- (6) Deliver the promise of polio-free Africa by eradicating all forms of polioviruses and implement integration and transition plans to allow health programs to preserve the gains in Member States and to benefit from the knowledge and expertise the polio program has generated through the eradication initiative.
- (7) Develop and capacitate African research and development (R and D) to enhance innovations in novel vaccines and new approaches for immunization implementation and uptake.
- (8) Build political will, and work with communities, especially women and youth, civil society organizations, traditional and religious leaders, health professional associations and parliamentarians, for the right of every child, every mother, and every community to have universal access to life-saving vaccines, and by extension the best possible chance for a healthy future.
- (9) Formulate national policies to expand the benefits of immunization beyond infancy for populations at risk throughout their life course to protect the most vulnerable populations and the national health system.
- (10) Promote and build capacity for continental, regional, and local manufacturing of vaccines and other public health countermeasures as well as strengthen national regulatory authorities through the African Vaccine Regulatory Forum (AVAREF) and the African Medicines Agency (AMA).

INVITE:

- (1) All partners, including the African Development Banks, Regional Economic Communities and Regional Health Organisations, to support the implementation of this declaration, and to increase their efforts to mobilize resources and secure new investments to strengthen national immunization programmes to achieve the IA2030 goals and overall health care delivery systems in the Member States.
- (2) Manufacturers to facilitate access to available and new vaccines at affordable prices, and to ensure price transparency as well as developing price databases and support technology transfer to African companies.
- (3) GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance to consider Fragile, Conflict and Vulnerable (FCV) contexts as eligible recipients of GAVI support for vaccines and operational costs.
- (4) The Commission, Africa CDC, RECs, AUDA NEPAD, UNICEF, and WHO to support Member States to strengthen their capacities and share best practices and experiences, and to support Member States to establish mechanisms for robust monitoring of progress towards the fulfillment of these commitments.
- (5) The Commission in collaboration with WHO to report on the progress in implementing this declaration to the Heads of State and Government Summit in 2025.

THANK his Excellency Dr Julius Maada Bio, the President of Sierra Leone for championing this declaration.

DECLARED in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on this 19th day of February 2023.