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RESOLUTION

UTILIZING EHEALTH SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE NATIONAL HEALTH SYSTEMS IN THE AFRICAN REGION (Document AFR/RC63/9)

The Regional Committee,

Having examined the document entitled “Utilizing eHealth solutions to improve national health systems in the African Region”;

Aware of the significant role that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can play in strengthening national health systems and services;

Noting that eHealth can improve the quality and equity of health service as well as reduce cost in addition to providing information and evidence for policy and decision making;

Further noting that the use of ICT can improve national health systems through the use of eHealth solutions such as National Health Observatories (NHOs) as web-based platforms; Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) for better management and telemedicine and mobile health (mHealth). Other examples include electronic medical records (EMR); electronic referrals and prescriptions; and eLearning and electronic resources;

Recalling World Health Assembly resolution WHA58.28 on eHealth; Regional Committee Resolution AFR/RC56/R8 on Knowledge Management in the WHO African Region: Strategic Directions; the Ouagadougou Declaration on Primary Health Care and Health Systems in Africa: Achieving Better Health for Africa in the New Millennium; and the Algiers Declaration on Narrowing the Knowledge Gap to Improve Africa’s Health; Regional Committee Resolution AFR/RC60/5 on eHealth; the Recommendations of The UN Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health (CoIA); World Health Assembly resolution WHA66.24 on eHealth standardization and interoperability;

Aware that key challenges to wide-scale implementation of eHealth solutions include lack of ICT infrastructure on which to build the national health information infrastructure; attracting private sector investment; developing appropriate governance structures and mechanisms to ensure that accountability, transparency and effective leadership are in place; encouraging the development and use of high-priority eHealth solutions; developing the requisite human resources; and supporting secure electronic information exchange across a country’s geographical and health-sector boundaries.

1. ENDORSES Document AFR/RC63/9 entitled “Utilizing eHealth solutions to improve national health systems in the African Region”.
2. URGES Member States:
 - (a) to engage with the health ICT sector and the broader health sector to increase available investment funds and encourage the development of high priority eHealth solutions;
 - (b) to establish a national eHealth governing board or council coordinated by the ministry of health, responsible for setting overall national eHealth direction and priorities, for reviewing and approving national eHealth strategy and funding decisions, and for monitoring the progress of the strategy and evaluating its outcomes;
 - (c) to establish targeted stakeholder reference and working groups that will be engaged and involved throughout the development of the country’s eHealth strategy and plan;
 - (d) to establish a national compliance authority responsible for testing eHealth solutions and certifying their compliance with national eHealth standards;
 - (e) to identify a number of priority eHealth solutions that should be developed and deployed on a national scale, and develop high-level design and requirements for them;
 - (f) to prioritize the reinforcement of IT infrastructure, supply of energy, and connectivity through intersectoral engagement;
 - (g) to identify, evaluate and select partners able to undertake detailed design and implementation of eHealth solutions that adhere to high-level requirements and design;
 - (h) to coordinate donors’ efforts and align this effort with national health plans;
 - (i) to identify the priority consumer, care provider and health-care manager stakeholders that should be targeted for eHealth adoption and assess their readiness to adopt specific eHealth solutions;
 - (j) to guide the development of a competency framework and code of professional practice for health-care providers that would define their expectations and obligations to collect, store and share high-quality electronic health-care information in a timely, appropriate and secure manner;
 - (k) to work with education institutions to include eHealth in their curricula, identify and establish specialized eHealth courses and qualifications and implement formalized training/education programmes;
 - (l) to adopt secure messaging/communication standards to ensure that information exchanged through a national eHealth environment remains private and confidential, can be authenticated and is only delivered to the intended recipient;
 - (m) to establish a national, internet-based information repository as part of a national health observatory to capture eHealth project accomplishments and enable knowledge sharing within the health sector.

3. REQUESTS the Regional Director:

- (a) to continue supporting countries to develop or revitalize their national eHealth strategies and the deployment of mobile health, telehealth and telemedicine services;
- (b) to continue supporting countries to implement and develop their NHOs including the evaluation of such strategies, systems and services;
- (c) to provide guidance on the quality of health information, privacy of health data and utilization of international standards for eHealth interoperability;
- (d) to support Member States in monitoring eHealth services and in documenting and sharing best practices;
- (e) to report to the Sixty-fifth Session of the Regional Committee, and thereafter every other year, on the progress being made.