

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Date: 14 Feb 2023

Venue: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

MEDIA ADVISORY

36th Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly Side-event on Immunization

INVITATION TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MEDIA

What: High-level Side-event on Immunization

Theme: “*Building Momentum for Routine Immunization Recovery in Africa*”

When: Sunday, 19 February 2023, from 12H00 – 13H30 (GMT+3)

Where: AU HQ in Addis Ababa, Medium Conference Hall.

Who: The African Union Commission, Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development, in partnership with the World Health Organization.

Background:

The 2016 Addis Ababa Declaration on Immunization – a historic pledge endorsed by Heads of State at the 28th African Union Summit, aimed to increase political will to achieve these global and regional goals. This Declaration included the dedication to increasing resources and the need to negotiate with manufacturers to provide vaccines at a reasonable price and improve price transparency to strengthen immunization programs. Subsequently, in February 2016, Ministers from 45 Member States attended the Ministerial Conference on Immunization in Africa, organized by the World Health Organization (WHO) and committed to continue investing in immunization programs.

The unprecedented pressure on immunization supply chains, primary health care (PHC) systems, health workforces, and national budgets due to the COVID-19 pandemic have further exacerbated the backsliding in immunization rates in 20 countries that now contain three-quarters of the world’s zero-dose children. Among these countries are nine from the African region: Nigeria, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, Cameroon, Angola, Madagascar, Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania. In 2021, these nine countries accounted for 43% of zero-dose children recorded in the 20 priority countries (6.1 million out of 14.2 million) and 79% of zero-dose children in the African region. This child crisis could translate into high child morbidity and mortality across Africa; and the globe.

Strong immunization systems will be needed to protect people everywhere against COVID-19 and other diseases. To renew the continental focus on immunization, the Republic of Sierra Leone, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the World Health Organization, aim to convene a side event on the margins of the African Union Summit of Heads of State in February 2023 to position immunization as a critical contributor to people’s fundamental right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable physical and mental health and also as a critical investment in the Africa Health

Strategy (2016-2030), the AU Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG2030), creating a healthier, safer more prosperous Africa for all.

Objectives:

The 90-minute side event will convene Heads of State on the margins of the AU Summit in February 2023 and envisions achieving the following objectives:

1. To reignite the political will of Africa's leaders to keep universal access to immunization at the forefront of national recovery efforts to achieve long-term health, economic and development goals.
2. To renew political commitment to supporting investments in strengthening surveillance to detect outbreaks quickly, respond with urgency, and immunize all children who are not yet protected from vaccine-preventable diseases in Africa.
3. To motivate urgent integration of polio functions, assets, innovations and lessons to accelerate last-mile polio eradication action and boost routine immunization capacities on the continent

Expected outcome:

The consideration and adoption of the African Union Heads of State and Government Declaration on Revitalizing Routine and Reactive Vaccination Programmes in Africa.

Participation at the event:

Attendance is by invitation only. Members of the press accredited to cover the 36th Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly are invited to cover the High-level Side-event on Immunization

For more information, please contact:

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