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ANGOLA HOSTS FIRST AFRICAN MINISTERS OF HEALTH CONFERENCE CONVENED BY THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION AND THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION



Luanda, 16 April 2014 – The first jointly convened conference of African Ministers of Health, opened Wednesday 16 April 2014, in the Epic Sana Hotel, Luanda, Republic of Angola, facilitated by the African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The opening ceremony was chaired by H.E Manuel Domingos Vincente, Vice

President of the Republic of Angola in the Presence of Dr. Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko , Commissioner for Social Affairs of the AU, Dr. Luis Gomes Sambo, Regional Director of WHO for Africa, Amb Olawale I. Maiyegun, Director for Social Affairs of the AUC, the diplomatic corps and invited guests.

Despite improvements generally across the African health sector, the continent still bears a disproportionate burden of ill health. African countries continue to endure a large proportion of child and maternal mortality in comparison to other nations.

The problem of non-communicable diseases is still present, and indeed it is relevant and stakeholders have the opportunity to convene and comprehensively address this issue, especially if Africa is to continue to reduce incidences of communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and TB. Disease eradication, prevention & control are still high on the African agenda. The fight against infectious diseases has been a daunting

task. Nevertheless, the continent has made significant progress and this should not be hindered.



Health is an important driver of, and a key indicator for what sustainable development seeks to achieve. Africa is going through a dynamic transformation as witnessed by a surge in economic investment and vast improvements in infrastructure but for this to lead to sustainable and equitable development the

continent needs to make sure this translates into an improved quality of life for its citizens.

Addressing participants at the opening ceremony, Dr. Kaloko on behalf of the AUC Chairperson Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, said; *“As we contemplate the post-2015 development agenda, we have to remind ourselves that, more than ever, a human rights approach to the physical and mental health of our people is essential. We have to see health in the broader social, economic and environmental contexts and as a contributor to sustainable development. We have to focus on inclusiveness and identify opportunities across sectors in our health promotion goals. We have to consolidate our gains and take stock of our omissions and rectify it.”*

Commissioner Kaloko stressed on the need for a multi-sectoral, equity focussed approach to improving health outcomes, which includes leveraging the comparative advantage of a wide partner base including private sector, civil society, government expertise, and building on successful development models for the post Agenda 2015. (See complete speech of AUC Commissioner of Social Affairs on AU website: www.au.int).

Speaking on behalf of the Director General of WHO, Dr Sambo said, this meeting was an opportunity to work on the attainment of the development Agenda 2015 in the area of health even though he stressed that for this objective to be addressed fully, all African countries must commit to further strengthen the infrastructure in health which he said still remains a challenge. The WHO representative also highlighted the importance of funding health services in order to ensure universal health coverage.

“The rate of maternal mortality has decreased in the last years, yet the continent is witnessing an increasing number of non communicable diseases,” underlined Dr. Sambo. He added that Africa is preoccupied with the ebola outbreak which has cost the

lives of several people. He called on African countries to be vigilant and do substantial laboratory work to observe and control outbreaks while responding to the disease.

Speaking earlier, Angolan Vice President H.E Manuel Domingos Vicente stated that his country is focussing on improving the health condition of the population. “This is why we need to join efforts to lay the basis of health coverage in Africa,” he noted. He added that human resources need to be addressed through revitalised programs to improve health systems in Africa. Vice President Vicente pointed out that his country has enhanced primary health services in rural areas, embarked on funding of health services at municipal levels to reach out to the local populations, decreased HIV/AIDs transmission from mother to child and invested in polio eradication due to efficient campaign programs among others.

Prof. Onyebuchi Chukwu, Minister of Health of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on his part, recalled that African countries during the Abuja +12 Summit on HIV/AIDs, malaria and tuberculosis, have put health at the core of the Post 2015 development agenda. He noted that some progress has been made in this area and underscored the need to set up prevention and accountability mechanisms and promote locally manufactured medicines.

The meeting which closes on Thursday 17 April, is expected to come out with renewed commitments on how to move forward on existing global commitments in an effort to ensure that Africa addresses universal health coverage in Africa, non-communicable diseases, reduces maternal mortality and puts in place accountability mechanisms to assess the implementation of declarations and other commitments made by African ministers of health, amongst others. The meeting will further provide a space to deliberate, and to propel action on critical health issues that affect populations across Africa. The meeting will also facilitate discussions on issues that political and public health authorities in Africa are requested to efficiently and strategically intervene in.

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