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The 3rd STC on Health, Population and Drug Control Focuses On Increased Domestic Financing for Universal Health Coverage for All Africans Including Refugees, Returnees and IDPs

Cairo, Egypt 29th July 2019 - The Third Ordinary Session of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Health, Population and Drug Control (STC-HPDC-3), opened with the Experts Meeting, today Monday 29 July 2019, in Cairo, Egypt.

The Ordinary Session, themed “*Increased Domestic Financing for Universal Health Coverage and Health Security for All African Citizens - Including Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons*”, is in the spirit of the African Union theme for 2019 “The Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa”. It is being spearheaded by the AU Commission’s Department of Social Affairs.



Speaking at the Opening ceremony of the high-level meeting, Mme. Cisse Mariama Mohamed, Director of Social Affairs at the African Union Commission, said that the AUC is working closely with the Africa Centres for Disease Control & Prevention (Africa CDC) to implement various initiatives in collaboration with Member States and stakeholders to improve the well-being of Africans citizens.

“Some of the initiatives that the Department has implemented include the advocating for increased domestic financing for health as evident by the hosting of the Africa Leadership Meeting in Addis Ababa which called upon Head of States and relevant stakeholders in the health sector to increase financing for health through public and private partnerships”, she added.

The Director noted that the Department has led the development of scorecards on domestic financing for health, Malaria, Tuberculosis (TB) and CARMMA to serve as accountability frameworks in addressing health issues which are revised every year.

The overall objective of the STC-HPDC-3 is to undertake in-depth discussions around increased domestic financing for universal health coverage and health security, including refugees, returnees, internally displaced persons and often hard to reach population. Broad areas of deliberation will include health systems strengthening mechanisms, human resources for health, and investment in treatment of drug dependence among other things. This year's edition of the STC-HPDC will also look into measures of diminishing the effects of forced displacement on refugees and internally displaced persons.

Speaking on behalf of the STC Chair, Dr. Francis Smart, Director of Policy Planning and Information, Ministry of Health and Sanitation Sierra Leone, applauded Member States for their collaborative solidarity to prioritize health care in Africa. He also called upon the stakeholders in the field of health care to make people mobility and its ripple effect on spread of disease an integral part of the UHC conversation in Africa.

Dr. Mohammed Gad, Chief Executive of the Egyptian Ambulance Authority and Supervisor of The Foreign Health Relations Departments, reiterated the theme of the STC by emphasizing the need for Member States to make basic health care services available to all their citizens. He concluded by recalling on the progress Egypt has made as a country through the *100 Million Healthy People Program* which has saved the lives of about 1.3 million displaced persons living in Egypt.

Over three days, senior officials from the AU Member States will discuss papers on the Session's theme and hold three parallel sectorial sessions with presentations and discussions on health, population and drug control respectively.

In addition, the meeting will consider the following reports; the Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Task Force, the working group of STC on population & Common Africa Position on Population, the nutrition task force, the Africa health stats and CARMMA score card, IMNCHN & CARMMA evaluation and the Africa CDC Report.

The Meeting will also deliberate on Draft Africa Common Position on Antimicrobial Resistance, Draft Declaration on Viral Hepatitis, the Free to Shine Campaign progress report, the Zero Malaria Start with Me Campaign report, the Next Steps for the Post Africa Leadership Meeting on Domestic Financing for Health, the Draft Revised AU Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention (2019-2023), the Draft Implementation Report of the AU Plan of Action on Drug Control (2013-2017) (AUPA), the first Draft Pan-African Epidemiology Network on Drug Use Report (2016-2017), the outcome document of the continental consultation on Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) in Africa. The meeting will also prepare draft agenda and decisions of the Ministerial Meeting.

The Meeting is being attended by senior officials from ministries of health, population and drug control in the AU Member States, partners, AU Organs such as the Regional Economic Communities, Pan-African and International Organizations working in the areas of concern.

The Experts meeting will conclude on 31 July and present its report and recommendations to the Ministerial Meeting, scheduled for 1-2 August 2019.

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