

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Press Release No: _____/2022
Venue: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Date: 29th March 2022

The African Union Pledges to End Neglected Tropical Diseases By 2030 *Bold commitment and leadership in advance of the Kigali Summit on Malaria and NTDs*



Today, the African Union (AU) and Uniting to Combat NTDs signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to end neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) across the AU Member States by 2030. The agreement highlights the African Union's commitment to strengthen collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders to control and eliminate twenty NTDs, achieving the vision outlined by the "Agenda 2063 'The Africa We Want'" framework. This MoU shows bold leadership and the highest level of commitment to NTDs by the African Union, prioritising them in line with other infectious diseases.

NTDs are a group of twenty diseases, including trachoma, intestinal worms, leprosy, and elephantiasis. These diseases are preventable and treatable, yet they still affect 1.7 billion people around the world, with the African continent accounting for about 40% of the total global burden. Despite the relatively low mortality resulting from NTDs (around 500,000 deaths globally per year), these diseases and conditions are associated with severe complications, including blindness, disfigurement, social stigmatisation, mental health problems, chronic pain, cognitive impairment, and other long term irreversible damage causing impediments to education, employment, economic growth, and overall development.

AU Member States have been making tremendous progress in the fight against these diseases, showing that NTD goals are achievable. Several member states have achieved ambitious elimination targets, including Ghana, Morocco and The Gambia eliminating blinding trachoma; Egypt, Togo and Malawi eliminating lymphatic filariasis; and Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo and Uganda eliminating Guinea worm disease.

However, the job is not yet done. More work is needed to sustain these gains and bring more AU Member States across the finish line. Significant challenges remain in the journey to eliminate NTDs, such as poor integration of and coordination between the various programs working within the NTDs arena and insufficient and unstable funding, as well as climate change, conflict, and emerging threats like COVID-19.

"The African Union Commission is committed to the attainment of Aspiration one, Goal three of Agenda 2063; of well-nourished and health citizens. We are committed to work in collaboration with partners in order to progress the elimination of NTDs on the African Continent. We are delighted to be signing this MOU with Uniting to Combat NTDs which will advance advocacy on NTDs. As we have seen, the past two years have been dominated by COVID-19 and other diseases have suffered as a result. It's good that we are coming together at this time to make progress on these diseases that have not had the attention they deserve,"

reiterated H.E. Minata Samate Cessouma, Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development, AU Commission.

“We have seen how the delivery of essential health services has been impacted by COVID-19, this MOU couldn’t have come at a more perfect time. The new MOU will advance the implementation of the Continental Framework on NTDs and the Common Africa Position, with a strong focus on increased country leadership and ownership of national NTD programmes, matched by increased allocation of domestic resources,” emphasised Thoko Elphick-Pooley, Executive Director, Uniting to Combat NTDs said. The Common Africa Position on NTDs will be adopted by the African Union Specialised Technical Committee on Health, Population and Drug Control at the end of May, paving the way for it to be endorsed by Heads of State at the African Union Summit in 2023.

The announcement of the MOU also comes in advance of The Kigali Summit on Malaria and NTDs, to be held alongside the 26th Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) meeting in Rwanda next June. At the Summit, Heads of State, will launch the Kigali Declaration on NTDs - a high-level, political declaration which aims to mobilise political will and secure commitments to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG3) target on NTDs and to deliver the targets set out in the World Health Organization’s Neglected Tropical Disease Roadmap (2021-2030).

For media inquiries, please contact:

Mr. Gamal Eldin Ahmed A. Karrar | Senior Communication Officer | Information and Communication Directorate | E-mail: GamalK@africa-union.org

Ms. Whitney Mwangi | Health Policy Advocacy & Communications Consultant | Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs & Social Development (HHS), African Union Commission | E-mail: whitneym@africa-union.org

Ms. Christina Berry-Moorcroft | Senior Communications Manager | E-mail: press@unitingtocombatntds.org

Information and Communication Directorate, African Union Commission | E-mail: DIC@africa-union.org

Web: www.au.int | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia | **Follow Us:** [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [YouTube](#)