

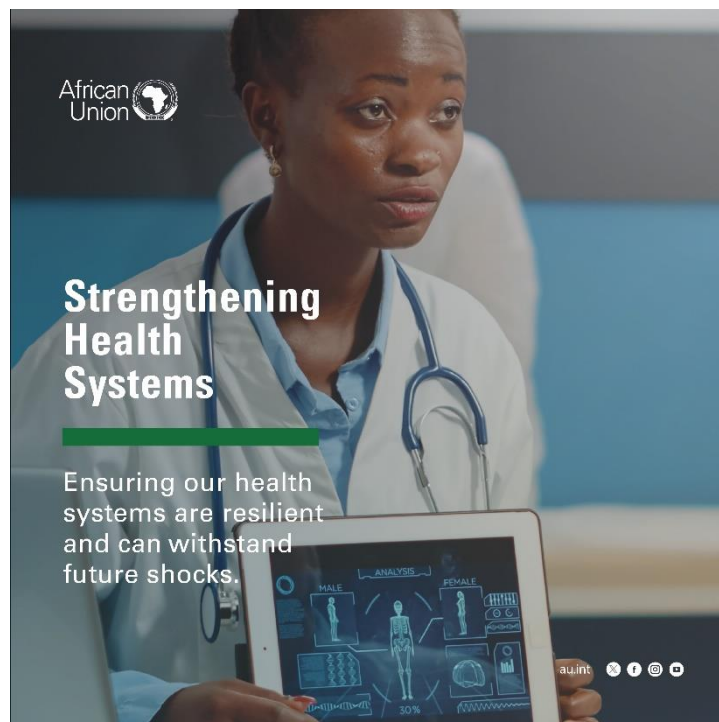
## INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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### **African Union Commission Announce New Initiatives to Tackle Health Challenges Across the Continent During the Fifth Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Health, Nutrition, Population, and Drug Control**



The African Union (AU) Commission convened its Fifth Ordinary Session of the African Union Specialised Technical Committee on Health, Nutrition, Population, and Drug Control (STC-HNPDC-5) from 5-9 August 2024 in Addis Ababa. Under the theme “Cultivating Wellness in Africa: Holistic Approaches to Health, Nutrition, Population, Drug Control, Crime Prevention, and Education,” a series of new initiatives to address the continent’s critical health challenges were unveiled.

Ministers from across the continent gathered to tackle pressing issues, including maternal and child health, the rise of communicable and non-communicable diseases, and the severe public health impacts of drug trafficking and substance abuse. Significant milestones achieved during the session include the operationalization of the Africa CDC, progress in the Re-Strengthened Campaign on the Accelerated

Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA Plus), and efforts to combat neglected tropical diseases (NTDs).

Prof. Julio Rakotonirina, Director for Health and Humanitarian Affairs at the AU, highlighted the Union's commitment to overcoming persistent health challenges, despite external pressures like climate change and global socio-economic shifts. He remarked, "The milestones achieved in the operationalization of the Africa CDC and the renewed focus on health financing underscore our collective commitment to improving the health and well-being of the African people."

The session saw the launch of a new phase of CARMMA Plus, focusing on the unfinished health agenda for women, newborns, children, and adolescents. This initiative aligns with the AU's Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and places a strong emphasis on reducing maternal mortality and promoting child health across the continent.

In addition, the AU made headway in addressing the growing problem of drug abuse and its public health consequences. The establishment of the Southern Africa Network of Traditional Leaders in Drug Demand Reduction is a strategic step in integrating traditional leadership into community-level drug prevention efforts. "This initiative demonstrates our innovative approach to addressing drug-related issues by leveraging traditional knowledge and leadership," Prof. Rakotonirina added.

The AU and its partners also reiterated the need for greater investments in health systems, as premised in the AU Assembly Declaration on Investing in Health (ALM Declaration), calling for synergy between health and finance sectors at the national level to enhance domestic resource mobilisation as a pathway to strengthen health financing.

Dr. Olubusayo Akinola, Head of the Social Welfare, Drug Control, and Crime Prevention Division, emphasized the importance of addressing the socio-economic determinants of health, stating, "We must tackle the root causes of health disparities with financial investment, innovative policies, and resilient health systems capable of withstanding external shocks."

The STC-HNPDC-5 concluded with a unified commitment from AU Member States to strengthen their health systems, address the socio-economic impacts of health disparities, and work toward a healthier, more prosperous future for all Africans. The resolutions and initiatives set forth during this session will lay the groundwork for ongoing efforts to improve health outcomes across the continent.

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