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Africa Leadership Meeting: Investing in Health

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SPEECH

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Chairperson, African Union Commission**

Please check against delivery

Excellencies Heads of States and Governments

Ladies and Gentlemen

All protocol duly observed.

Let me take this opportunity to welcome you all to the Africa Leadership Meeting: Investing in Health. This forum marks an important moment to acknowledge our collective responsibility and continued commitment to maintain health for all at the core of Africa's sustainable development agenda.

Our continent still suffers the double burden of infectious and non-communicable diseases. Women and children especially bear the brunt of these diseases. Therefore, investment in building resilient health systems and infrastructures to deliver effective and efficient healthcare services is a key priority to drive economic transformation and prosperity in the continent, as outline in Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda.

This requires continued political advocacy at various levels so that such policy priorities increase domestic investments for health, global solidarity and the efficient implementation of the continental strategies. More importantly, emphasis should be placed on predictable and viable domestic health financing.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

While many of our countries have made significant progress towards addressing health challenges and improving universal healthcare access, we cannot afford to be complacent in this journey.

The majority of health programmes are funded by development partners. While expressing our gratitude for the continued support, such dependency will not deliver sustainable growth and development results in the continent. This is why we are compelled to explore innovative and long-term sources

of domestic finance for our development priorities and projects. Africa's future lies in its ability to generate its own health finances to address the challenges at hand.

Both the Africa Health Strategy (2016-2030), which was adopted by Heads of State and Government in July 2017 in Kigali, and the Thirteenth General Programme of Work (2019-2023) WHO's new Strategy as elaborated by Dr. Tedros's vision, provide firm foundations for renewed leadership and governance structure of health systems with financing as the key pillar to strengthen all social service delivery, including universal access to healthcare. It is incumbent on all of us to ensure that these strategies and other continental and international frameworks related to health are implemented.

At this juncture I would like to acknowledge the remarkable work of a son of African whose work has contributed in advancing Global Health Agenda. Michel Sidibe, as the Executive Director of UNAIDS, has positively impacted the Global HIV/AIDS response and I would like to reiterate the continent's firm support to him as he continues to deliver on this important mandate.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the private sector that have joined us today, as we can build on their experience to transform Africa's health landscape. The AU-Private Sector partnership has proven a success in 2014 during the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. With the determination and commitment of African business, over 30 million USD were mobilized and nearly 2000 health workers were deployed.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The AU continues to count on the drive and resolve from all stakeholders on the continent, Member States, the private sector, academia and partners, to push forward Africa's health agenda.

Our gathering today paves the way to a new direction. We need joint investments from the private and public sectors of African Union Member

States. In the short to medium term we need to ensure that strategic partnerships for Universal Health Coverage move towards increased collaborations and co-investments at country, regional and continental level.

We need to ensure that we tap on the rapidly transforming economic landscape of Africa to increase domestic investments in health. This is the only assured way in which we can build a strong foundation for human capital development, harness the demographic dividend and achieve the bold and ambitious targets that we set in Agenda 2063.

I thank you.