



High-Level Event on Health Financing and Sustaining Action to End AIDS & related Communicable and Non-communicable Diseases

WELCOME REMARKS BY MRS. NARDOS BEKELE-THOMAS

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Protocols

Excellencies, I welcome you to this high-level Event on health financing and sustaining action to end AIDS and related communicable and non-communicable diseases. Thank you for honouring our invitation to be part of this dialogue that will shape the future of health systems strengthening for Member States. This is the right time for us to reflect on previous commitments, their implementation, and what has worked and what has not. The COVID-19 pandemic presented essential lessons that we should use to shape the future of our health systems. The African Continent

spearheaded collective actions to respond better. Furthermore, we saw the private sector coming together to work with the Governments to provide services to the people that needed them.

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Albeit all these positive actions, we still faced several challenges. The supply chain for medical products was disrupted, putting the Continent at risk of not ensuring availability and access to the needed medicines, vaccines, diagnostics and other technologies. We also saw our healthcare workers operating in very challenging situations, with some contracting COVID-19 and losing their lives in the line of duty. COVID19 was set back to the positive strides we had previously made towards attaining the commitment to end AIDS, TB and malaria in Africa by 2030. The pandemic impacted our already fragile health systems.

The impact of the pandemic is beyond the health sector. The pandemic has affected all sectors of the economy, highlighting the importance of investing in health.

Notwithstanding the importance of the health sector to our economies, we still see underinvestment in the sector across most countries on the Continent. The African Union has spearheaded several efforts to change the situation. Under the leadership of H.E Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, the AU convened global and continental health leaders in February 2019 for the African Leadership Meeting (ALM) on domestic financing for health. In February 2021, the AU Summit requested the Commission to speed up the implementation of the ALM-Investing in Health Declaration by assigning responsibility to AUDA-NEPAD to coordinate the creation of regional platforms to support Member States to increase domestic health financing. Since then, the AUDA-NEPAD has

worked with RECs to establish regional health financing hubs. Furthermore, the AUDA-NEPAD led the development of the AU Framework on Private Sector engagement in health, which is currently under implementation.

We can not continue with business as usual. We need to rethink and take seriously the financing of the health sector. The Abuja declaration to allocate 15% of our annual Budget to the health sector remains our guide. We must recommit to its implementation.

Over the years, AUDA-NEPAD has been playing our role in the fight against the AIDS, TB and Malaria epidemics through ensuring improved access to quality-assured medical products including diagnostics and technologies. We have been spearheading the implementation of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa (PMPA), the African Medicines Regulatory Harmonisation (AMRH) initiative which leading the way in supporting Member States to harmonise regulatory systems within their Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Five RECs (EAC, IGAD, ECOWAS, ECCAS and SADC) have been supported to roll out their harmonisation initiatives. In addition, eleven (11) Regional Centres of Regulatory Excellence (RCORES) have been established to support research and regulatory capacity building. This year, we are establishing the African Regulatory Sciences Professionals Institute (ARSPI), which will ensure sustainable and responsive regulatory capacity strengthening on the Continent.

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The coming into force of the African Medicines Agency (AMA) Treaty is an important milestone for the Continent. Aligned and coordinated

regulatory systems will open up the continental market for pharmaceuticals and enable our manufacturers to leverage the advantages of the AfCFTA. The AUDA-NEPAD will continue provide technical support to the Member States for the operationalisation of the AMA.

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have also provided technical support in implementing the AU Catalytic Framework to end AIDS, TB and Malaria by 2030. We have supported countries in the SADC region to implement innovative approaches to preventing, detecting, and treating TB-a concomitant infection to HIV. A South-South learning platform has been established to facilitate learning on private sector engagement in TB control across the Continent and the global south.

Building on the COVID-19 pandemic lessons, we have moved towards supporting countries to strengthen their systems to offer timely and quality Primary Health Care (PHC). We are collaborating with WHO and ILO to implement an initiative on "Caring for those who care". The programme focuses on safeguarding the health, safety and well-being of health workers in Africa. This is a critical contribution to the attainment of the 95-95-95 targets.

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I hope this meeting will provide an opportunity for all of us to reflect on our past commitments, take stock of the progress we have made in achieving these targets, the challenges we have faced, and the key lessons we have learned. The declaration and Roadmap to 2030, which will be discussed

here, should be matched with meaningful and tangible resources for implementation. Only then will we be able to say we are winning the war!

Let me conclude by expressing gratitude to our Partners particularly PEPFAR, UNAIDS, STBF, BMGF, and World Bank for your support and hope you will continue to accompany us on the journey to end AIDS and preventable maternal and child deaths in Africa.

Let me once again thank you for responding positively to our invitation. I hope this is the beginning of a positive force in financing health and sustaining action to end AIDS and related communicable and non-communicable diseases.

I wish you fruitful deliberations, and thank you for your attention.

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I have the honour to invite H.E Mr Moussa Faki, The Chairperson of the African Union Commission to deliver the key note Address.