

Young minds together

African medical students convened in Nigeria to discuss repositioning healthcare in Africa for sustainable development

'In the era of the MDGs [Millennium Development Goals], Africa witnessed development in different spheres, albeit unevenly distributed and at a slow pace. Today, our continent is still faced with significant economic, social and environmental challenges which we must continue to take proactive steps to tackle.' This was the statement of WHO Regional Director for Africa, Dr Matshidiso Moeti.

In November 2018, around 1,500 delegates gathered at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria in the 32nd General Assembly of the Federation of African Medical Students' Associations General Assembly (FAMSA GA). The conference,

themed *Repositioning healthcare in Africa for Sustainable Development*, was the largest gathering of African medical students in the world. The assembly discussed

solutions from vibrant young minds as well as professionals and relevant stakeholders in both the public and private sectors from across Africa and beyond. This was geared at initiating steps to position Africa on the path to sustainable development in health and by extension in every other sphere of human development.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are all interwoven and integrated, with SDG goal 3 directly related to health. Healthcare is central to the overall development of a region, hence, Africa must reposition healthcare if it is to achieve sustainable development. FAMSA believes that to achieve this healthcare goal, Africa must take a leading role in revolutionizing its healthcare systems to improve health indices across the

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continent which are, at present, abysmal.'

That is why the students got together to discuss important developmental issues in health. Considering that they are the future providers of health care, this was an important milestone for the African continent. Sustainability is important for healthcare in Africa. As healthcare students and as youths, they have enormous power to bring change to this pivotal aspect of humanity. This conference was aimed at achieving this.

The assembly was addressed by speakers including: Dr Muhammad Ali Pate, CEO of Big Win Philanthropy; Professor Kayode A. Odusote, Chairman of the Founda-

tion for Sustainable Health Development; Dr Clement Lugala Peter, Team Lead for the WHO Health Emergencies Program; Adam Thompson, Executive Director of eHealth Systems Africa; Jean-Marie Dangou,

Team Lead of

WHO NCDs Integrated Management Programme; and Dr Elsie Kiguli-Malwadde, the Director of Health, Workforce Education and Development at the African Centre for Global Health and Social Transformation based in Uganda.

FAMSA topics covered issues on the African medical student and the SDGs, and infectious diseases in Africa. Speakers at the assembly stressed the need to prioritise the burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), outbreak and disaster management, mental health, maternal and child health, medical education in Africa, health policy and financing as well as social determinants of health.

It had the largest attendance in the history of FAMSA probably because it coincided with the 50th anniversary of the federation. FAMSA was celebrated in a grand style and this meeting was of high-impact, world-changing for all delegates and for Africa as observed by Jesutofunmi A. Omiye, the organising committee Chairperson FAMSA GA 2018.



New medical students, 2019