Health Ministers in the East Central and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC) commit to enhancing health systems for equity, resilience and sustainability in the region

Enhancing health systems for equity, resilience, and sustainability requires strengthening capacity for primary healthcare, climate-resilient infrastructure, investing in a skilled health and care workforce, and ensuring equitable financing. Health system resilience is the ability of a health system to maintain essential services during shock events, while enhancing equity addresses pre-existing inequalities by ensuring that marginalized populations have access to essential health services and financial protection. Sustainability requires the implementation of eco-friendly practices, predictable financing and ensuring an adequate trained health and care workforce.

From February 3rd - 5th, 2026, the ECSA-HC 76th health ministerial conference (HMC) was held in the Royal Kingdom of Eswatini, under the theme: "***Enhancing Health Systems for Equity, Resilience and Sustainability***". This year's HMC was a defining moment for Member States and partners to share best practices, lessons learnt and challenges to inform future perspectives at a time when overseas development assistance is declining. The HMC was preceded by three regional meetings-the regional youth summit, the regional health financing meeting and the regional "One Health" antimicrobial resistance (AMR) meeting.

In this volume of the Africa Health Journal (AHJ), we capture the rich deliberations and conclusions from the 76th HMC. The volume commences with three opinion pieces. In the first piece, Dr. Ntuli Kapologwe, Director General ECSA-HC, notes that "Regional cooperation is key to Africa's health future, because health threats do not recognize borders. Dr Susan Tembo, the World Health Organisation (WHO) Country Representative for Eswatini in an opinion piece titled "***Leaving no one behind: Every person must access quality health services without financial hardship***", reminds us that across our region, health needs are evolving, public expectations are rising, but fiscal space is tightening. Dr Tembo notes that our collective obligation remains: "***to ensure that every person can access quality health services without financial hardship, and that our health systems can withstand shocks while sustaining essential service delivery***". Dr. Lul Pout Riek, the Regional Director, Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), Southern Africa Collaborating Centre (RCC), provides insights into the role of the Africa CDC in advancing Africa's Health Security and Sovereignty (AHSS) Agenda.

These seminal opinion pieces are followed by the 76th HMC proceedings that culminate into ten landmark resolutions aimed at advancing health financing, youth leadership, and stronger health systems. Finally, the special volume presents feature articles that reflect the sub-themes covered at the HMC, including: accelerating the achievement of UHC through sustainable health financing; building capacity for health emergency preparedness, response and resilience; advancing reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health; enhancing regional data integration; addressing non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and mental health; health and care workforce development; enhancing governance and leaderships; control of communicable diseases and elimination of neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) and malaria; driving innovation and resilience; local manufacturing for health; and fostering partnerships for resilient health systems.

Complimentary partnerships are critical in driving regional health agendas. The ECSA-HC is a regional inter-governmental health organization. One of its objectives is to promote improvement of health systems and services amongst its Member States. The Africa CDC is an autonomous health institution of the African Union (AU) charged with the responsibility of prevention and control of diseases in all Member States in Africa. The WHO is the directing and coordinating authority on international health, and provides leadership on global health matters, shapes the health research agenda, sets health norms and standards, articulates evidence-based policy, provides technical support to countries, and monitors and assesses health trends.

Considering the mutual objectives of these organisations, there is a need for them to adapt to the evolving health and financial landscape and the priorities of the Member States, particularly in light of new global health challenges and the need to accelerate the achievement of UHC by 2030.

This joint publication reflects the willingness of the three agencies to cooperate in facilitating the implementation of regional health programmes. Such complementary partnerships will support Member States in strengthening their health systems to deliver quality essential health services across the life course. It is the collective action of Member States and their partners that will drive us to achieve the aspirations of the AU Agenda 2063-The Africa we want.

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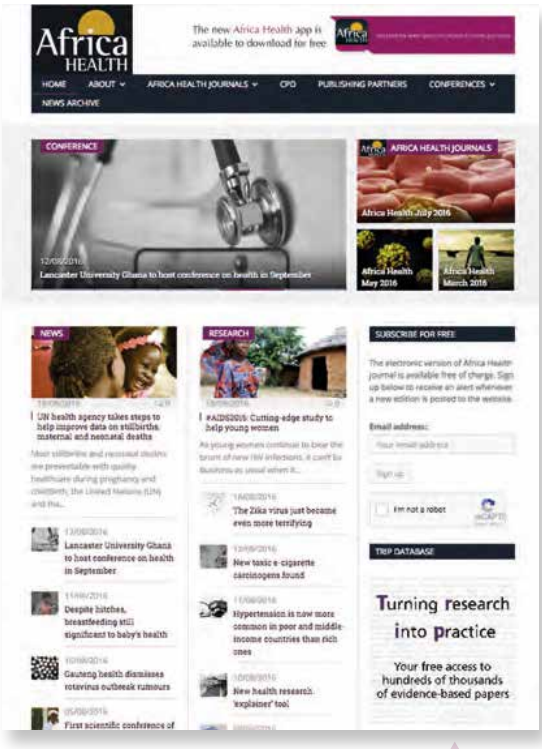

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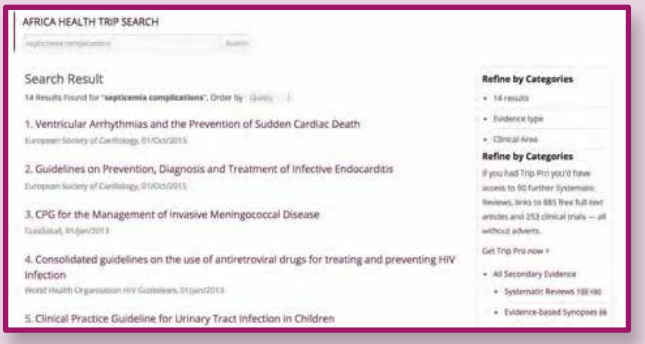

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