

**STATEMENT OF THE MINISTERS OF HEALTH OF THE AFRICAN UNION ON THE
OCCASION OF THEIR SPECIAL SESSION, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND,
14 - 15 MAY 2004**

WE, Ministers of Health of the African Union, meeting in Geneva on the occasion of the Special Session, organised in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI);

RECALLING the Abuja Declaration and Plan of Action on Roll Back Malaria of 2000, the Abuja Declaration and Plan of Action on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases of 2001, the Maputo Declaration on Malaria, HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases of 2003, the Maputo decision on Polio Eradication of 2003, AU/NEPAD Health Strategy of 2003 and the Millennium Development Goals;

CONSIDERING the challenges of implementing the above Declarations and Decisions; critical issues in the fight against HIV/AIDS, TB, Malaria and Other Related Infectious Diseases; the progress of immunization in Africa; access to essential drugs and consumables for HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria; health systems in Africa; partnerships in the health sector; ownership and sustainability of initiatives in public health;

APPRECIATING the support of all our Partners in the implementation of our health programmes;

REALIZING the importance of accelerating the effective implementation and monitoring of the above Declarations and Decisions;

HEREBY RESOLVE TO:

- 1. Mobilise** total political commitment and leadership at all levels and facilitate greater involvement of communities and civil society in meeting Africa's health challenges in the 21st Century.
- 2. Ensure** both national ownership and leadership of health initiatives and programmes, and encourage each country to establish one national strategy, one coordinating body and one monitoring framework for all initiatives to combat HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria, and Other Related Infectious Diseases.
- 3. Improve** communication and coordination between relevant ministries, private sector, civil society and international development partners.
- 4. Mobilise** greater domestic resources to fight HIV/AIDS, TB, Malaria and Other Related Infectious Diseases, including for vaccines and immunization, and in particular to ensure the realization of the target of allocating at least 15 per cent of our national budgets to the health

sector as set at the Abuja Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity in 2001.

5. Urge all Member States of the African Union to contribute resources to the Global Fund, in order to demonstrate solidarity and shared responsibility in the call made by Heads of State and Government of the African Union in the Maputo Declaration.

6. Develop mechanisms to ensure sustainability of global health initiatives in the African region, looking beyond planned initial target dates, in particular the “3 by 5” Initiative beyond 2005.

7. Accelerate the strengthening of health systems in order to improve access to health services, paying particular attention to:

- Improving Information, Education and Communication at all levels in the implementation of health strategies;
- Promoting appropriate policies and strategies to train, motivate and retain human resources and increase their deployment in rural areas;
- Developing and maintaining infrastructure, especially technical capacity in health units particularly laboratories;
- Reinforcing research capacity;
- Utilizing existing services to improve delivery and access to Insecticide Treated Nets, as well as indoor residual spraying with insecticides;
- Ensuring the attainment of Polio Eradication targets;
- Developing and improving capacity to respond more effectively to health challenges.

8. Strengthen health programmes that address non-communicable diseases and place special focus on programmes related to maternal and child health, health promotion, nutrition and health literacy.

9. Utilize and develop Africa’s capacity to use biotechnology to produce drugs and vaccines at national or sub-regional levels.

10. Engage in more active dialogue with pharmaceutical companies to ensure universal, equitable access to affordable quality drugs (including generics) and vaccines.

11. Mobilise adequate resources to expand research and use of traditional medicine in line with the Decade for African traditional medicine (2001 – 2010).

HEREBY REQUEST:

1. The African Union Commission to:

- Improve communication and coordination with the Ministers of Health;
- Ensure effective and timely monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the implementation of Declarations and Decisions;
- Strengthen its capacity to respond effectively to its mandate on health;

- Collaborate with WHO Regional Offices for Africa and Eastern Mediterranean, and Regional Economic Communities of the African Union in harmonising the implementation of initiatives in health;
- Participate in major fora where important health issues are discussed and decisions taken.

2. External donors to make available increased, sustainable financing, towards health system improvement in general and priority health interventions, in particular through mechanisms such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), and through such development financing opportunities as the proposed International Finance Facility and the European Development Fund (EDF).

3. Multilateral and Bilateral Agencies to harmonize and coordinate their activities and also streamline their procedures to improve access to, and efficient utilization of resources.

4. The Bureau of the Conference of the Ministers of Health to monitor the implementation of these Decisions in collaboration with the Commission of the African Union and report to the next meeting.