



Communique on Strengthening and Establishing National Public Health Institutes as Part of a Network of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention

We, country senior health officials, directors of national public health institutes, multilateral agencies, development partners, professional associations, and academic institutions, are gathering for the 1st Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) meeting on the “Strengthening National Public Health Institutes and Africa CDC Regional Collaborating Centres (RCCs) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 26 to 28th February 2018.

Cognizant of the multiple health challenges that Africa faces including: 1) rapid population growth leading to increased population movement across the continent and the world; 2) existing endemic diseases of poverty (HIV, TB, Malaria, NTDs), emerging infectious pathogens, and the ascendance of antimicrobial resistance; 3) increasing incidence of non-communicable diseases and injuries; 4) persistently high maternal mortality rates; 5) threats posed by environmental toxins; and Natural disasters, intentional biological threats.

Recalling the Assembly Declaration (Assembly/AU/Decl.3 (XXIX) of the Heads of State and Government on accelerating implementation of International Health Regulations in Africa of July 2017; in which they were deeply concerned about the increasing public health events and recurrent epidemics on our continent and their enormous socio-economic impact, as well as the inadequate implementation of the International Health regulations. As such they committed to:

- i) Accelerate the implementation of International Health Regulation (IHR) at national, provincial and local levels with a clear road map and monitoring mechanisms;
- ii) Institute multi-sectorial mechanisms to accelerate the implementation of IHR;
- iii) Mobilize the necessary resources to implement the road maps for acceleration of implementation of IHR.

Recalling also the heads of state and government’s declaration in July 2013 at the African Union Special Summit on HIV, TB and Malaria in Abuja, in which African leaders recognized the need for an Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) to conduct life-saving research on priority health problems and to serve as a platform to share knowledge and build capacity in responding to public health emergencies and threats in Africa.

Considering the African Union assembly in 2014 devoted to responding to the Ebola outbreak, African leaders formally endorsed an accelerated timeline to launch the Africa CDC, together with the five regional centres, by mid-2015.

Considering also that the heads of state and governments officially launched the Africa CDC in January 2017.

Bearing in mind, the duty and political mandate that National Public Health Institutes/Agencies/other equivalent bodies play in coordinating public health functions across the country, address health challenges, and coordinate the response to them; working in partnership with other stakeholders (WHO and partners);

Acknowledging the strong evidence that health security depends on the establishment of resilient and adaptive national health systems, with a clearly defined public health coordination mechanism;

Recognising the responsibility to meet the commitments within the SENDAI Framework. This is a voluntary agreement and a significant framework for health implementation and emphasizes the use of an all-hazards approach, linking to epidemics and pandemics and to the International Health Regulations.

Acknowledging the contributions of NPHIs to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals

Recalling further the AU Africa Agenda 2063, which is a strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of the continent over the next 50 years builds on, and seeks to accelerate the implementation of past and existing continental initiatives for growth and sustainable development.

Collectively, we:

- **Reaffirm and commit** to strengthening networking between the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), its Regional Collaborating Centres, National Public Health Institutes, Universities, and other centers of excellence.
- **Reaffirm** the need for multi-sectoral, multi-country, and Continental strategies for prevention, control, and response to disease outbreaks and the need to accelerate capacity and ability for the implementation of IHR (2005) in collaboration with WHO.
- **Recognise** that strong and functional NPHIs are critical to the acceleration of the implementation of IHR and ensuring national commitment and ownership of compliance.
- **Acknowledge** the key role and need for a standardized monitoring and evaluation framework to measure progress in strengthening NPHIs and ensuring support for IHR, building on the Joint External Evaluation and other WHO-coordinated IHR M&E processes.

- **Advocate** for the establishment of NPHIs as a core coordinating function in all national health systems.
- **Request** the African Union Commission to engage relevant sectors including finance, agriculture, animal, environment, peace and security to support the implementation of IHR (2005) and the strengthening of NPHIs in one health approach.
- **Request also** the African Union Commission and Africa CDC to better coordinate partners and donor's efforts to support NPHIs and IHR (2005) implementation in collaboration with WHO.
- **Invite** AU Member States to develop and strengthen functional National Public Health Institutes/Agencies in Africa.
- **Call upon** nongovernmental organizations, donors, partners, and the private sector to support this National Public Health Institute agenda.
- **Invite also AU Member States to:**
 - ensure the inclusion of the mission and responsibilities of NPHIs within National Health plans **and** to develop, a framework for a phased-approach towards the establishment of NPHIs.
 - revise or establish NPHIs national strategic plans, implementation and action plans and policies.
 - secure required resources including finance to support the development, strengthening and operationalization of NPHI frameworks and strategic plans.
- **Call upon also** nongovernmental organizations, donors, partners, and the private sector to develop innovative strategies to promote NPHI contributions to RCCs.
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- **Request further** Africa CDC and the Commission to:
 - strengthen the Regional Integrated Surveillance and Laboratory Networks with links to NPHIs and Regional Collaborating Centres.
 - develop and implement a framework for legal regulations for developing NPHIs.
 - develop frameworks to guide countries to develop/strengthen/monitoring NPHIs.
- **Invite further** for endorsement of the Africa CDC-led development and implementation of a standardized scorecard to promote routine assessment of the preparedness and capacity of NPHIs and IHR (2005).