

OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE LUSAKA CALL-TO-ACTION TO STRENGTHEN PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTRES IN AFRICAN UNION MEMBER STATES

COMMUNIQUE BY MEMBER STATES OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN REGION

We, the Ministers of Health of the African Union Member States in the Southern Region, gathered on 10 September 2022 in Livingstone, Zambia;

NOTING WITH CONCERN the increasing number of public health events and recurrent epidemics including the COVID-19 pandemic on the continent; and the enormous socio-economic impact;

AWARE of the high burden of epidemics and other emergency events in our Region, and the imminent risks of emerging and re-emerging diseases;

RECOGNIZING the challenges in coordinating and managing resources, information and data, to prepare for and respond to multiple disease outbreaks and other emergency events in the Africa;

ACKNOWLEDGING the relevant existing frameworks, protocols, strategies and agreements;

WELCOMING the Lusaka Call-to-Action to strengthen Public Health Emergency Operations Centres (PHEOCs) in Africa;

COMMENDING the close collaborations and the efforts being made by the Africa CDC, WHO, and other partners to strengthen and establish PHEOCs;

MINDFUL that the African Union Member States are at different stages of establishment of national and functional PHEOCs to fulfil the International Health Regulations

(IHR) commitments.

CALL UPON AU Member States in the Southern Region to:

- Establish and/or strengthen PHEOCs with legal mandates, equipped with the right infrastructure, and dedicated, well-trained human resources within the next 2 years;

- Provide national PHEOCs with sustainable financing for effective operations in responding to public health emergencies;
- Support the establishment of a regional PHEOC technical Working group (TWG) that sets the priorities and tracks the progress of PHEOC implementation in the region; and
- Include PHEOCs as a standing agenda item in the Regional Steering Committee meetings.

CALL UPON Africa CDC to:

- Establish and facilitate a regional PHEOC TWG to set the regional priorities and track progress of PHEOC implementation in the region; and
- Establish a continental public health emergency management training program to meet the growing needs of well-trained human resources for PHEOCs;

FURTHER CALL UPON WHO, other partners and stakeholders in emergency preparedness and response to:

- Closely coordinate and collaborate with Africa CDC, and provide the necessary support to the Regional PHEOC TWG;
- Support AU Member States to fast track implementation of the Lusaka Call to Action; and
- Mobilize resources and experts necessary to accelerate the implementation of the national PHEOC roadmaps

This communique is delivered at the High-level Meeting of Health Ministers of the AU Southern Region Member States **on the 10th of September 2022, in Livingstone, Zambia.**