



EU-AU health partnership: The ball is in the EU's court!

Brussels, 27th March 2024

The High-level event on the EU-AU partnership in Global Health for Equitable Access, which took place on 20th March 2024, shows the continued prominence of health in the EU-AU Partnership. As many speakers pointed out, the pandemic was a “*wake-up call*” which highlighted the urgent need to step up investments in, and strengthen, health systems on both continents, thus embedding equity, human rights, access and solidarity at the heart of health cooperation.

As civil society organisations working to promote global health, we are encouraged to see the EU and AU stepping up their cooperation in the area of health, including by launching a series of joint flagship Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs). This momentum cannot be lost and health must remain a key political priority of the next mandate of the European Commission.

Following these declarations, the ball is in the EU's court to transform this partnership of declarations, ambitions, and good intentions into a meaningful one, to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the objectives of SDG3, and to attain the right to health which remains elusive for millions of people. **As such, we would like to:**

- **Welcome the strong (and overdue) focus on Africa's health sovereignty.** We would however like to recall that, as evidenced by whole-of-society approaches, civil society and communities are central to effective and rights-based health interventions. Participation of civil society and communities, including people representing marginalised groups in policy-making is an integral element of democratic and inclusive sovereignty and should be better embedded in the partnership.
- **Underscore the central role of the negotiations on the Pandemic Accord** in the realisation of the partnership. The negotiations remain a roadblock that needs to be addressed by the EU and its Member States. Should these negotiations not deliver a meaningful agreement changing the status quo, **the entire partnership will be compromised**, and the hopes for Africa's health sovereignty will be in peril.
- **Call out the redeployments decided in the context of the Multiannual Financial Framework Midterm Review (MFF MTR)**, which are at odds with the ambition of the EU-AU partnerships and the Global Health Strategy. As the Commission has started its

reflection on the MFF post-2027, the EU budget that would lead us to the final milestones of the Agenda 2030, we would like to call on the EU to **adequately resource its external action**, placing investments in human development at the core.

- Prioritise the implementation of the partnership **through public sector initiatives**.
- **Establish and apply clear ethical standards** and criteria for public-private partnerships in health to avoid the commodification of health services and safeguard rights, and equal access for all.
- **Ensure that the principles of equity and inclusion** underpin the EU health programming and the implementation of the EU Global Health Strategy. This should be based on reaching those with the greatest need who are the furthest behind first, and linked to **clear accountability measures**.
- Welcome the acknowledgement of the importance of **applying a rights-based approach to health**, with equity and solidarity being key principles to achieve UHC based on the right to health. Welcome in particular the **recognition of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)** as key components of essential health services.
- **Celebrate the formal launch of the EU-supported UNITAID-UNFPA partnership** to accelerate access to innovative solutions and medicines in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) to end preventable maternal deaths. This effort should be complemented with funding from the EU's research programme to catalyse the development and deployment of innovative, accessible and affordable tools that are still largely missing for many reproductive and maternal health challenges; a concrete example of the synergies the recently published Horizon Europe 2025-2027 strategic plan aims to seek with the EU's external cooperation programme.