

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON RESEARCH FOR HEALTH IN THE AFRICAN REGION

Algiers, 23–26 June 2008

The Algiers Declaration

We, ministers of health and heads of delegation of the African countries, meeting in Algiers on 26 June 2008 for the Ministerial Conference on Research for Health in Africa,

Considering

1. The magnitude of health problems associated with poverty and climate change, notably prevalent infectious diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, emerging diseases and neglected tropical diseases and the resurgence of epidemic-prone diseases and other complex emergency situations;
2. The diseases and conditions affecting sexual and reproductive health, in particular maternal, neonatal and child health, adolescent and geriatric health, as well as non communicable diseases, malnutrition and mental health, including drug and substance abuse;
3. The burden of disease and limitations of weak and fragile health systems;
4. The inadequate institutional and infrastructural and regulatory capacity to conduct high-quality investigation in public health, basic science, product development and operational research;
5. The increasing gap in the application of existing and new technologies for improvement of public health in our countries, and the need to expand access to appropriate and cost-effective tools to address numerous health problems;
6. The migration of human resources for health from our countries to developed countries;
7. The critical need to inform and protect human subjects relating to research;

Recognizing

1. The difficulties encountered by our countries in achieving national and internationally-agreed health targets, including the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);
2. The need for appropriate platforms to improve our capacities to share knowledge and evidence to inform health policies and practices that will positively impact on the health of population;
3. The need for national research agendas responsive to country challenges and priorities, as well as to global public health priorities;
4. The need for adequate investment in, and incentives for, research and development to produce new and effective medicines, diagnostics, vector control tools and vaccines, and to promote research in traditional medicine and strengthen health systems, taking into account the socio-cultural and environmental situation of the people;
5. The urgent need for our governments to put in place mechanisms to address the aforementioned concerns and to promote research and the utilization of research findings in our health systems;
6. The increased global attention given to the promotion of development and poverty reduction especially as expressed in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), thereby creating an unprecedented opportunity for formulating evidence-informed policies and strategies;
7. The investments and successes so far in health research.

Building on previous commitments made by our governments to our people and by the global community in favour of priority health research, including texts or instruments such as the United Nations Millennium Declaration on development, the African Union Health Strategy, the Mexico Declaration adopted in November 2004, the Abuja Declaration of March 2006, the Accra Declaration on Health Research adopted in June 2006 and the Ouagadougou Declaration on Primary Health Care and Health Systems in Africa of April 2008;

1. Commit ourselves to working together to give the necessary impetus to the strengthening of national health research systems, national health information systems and knowledge systems through the optimization of investments, better coordination and enhanced management in order to improve the health of the people of Africa.

2. Also commit ourselves to launching before the end of 2009 the actions that follow:

- a) Strengthen coordination within the health sector and among all ministries contributing to the development of science and technology, including health, and establish governance structures to promote ethics and increase public trust in research;
- b) Develop or strengthen comprehensive national health research policies and strategic frameworks that are based on systematic and standardized assessments of existing health research and knowledge systems.
- c) Expand the health research agenda to include broad and multidimensional determinants of health.
- d) Create and strengthen South-South and North-South cooperation and collaboration including technology transfer;
- e) Link health research and development efforts with health needs and explore partnerships between governments, academic institutions, private sector entities and civil society organizations;
- f) Create sub regional centres of excellence to promote research and generate evidence for better decisions; the principal activities of the aforesaid centres shall focus on disease surveillance, public health laboratories and quality control of food and drugs;
- g) support the development of human resources for research through initial and further training and promotion of access to scientific information;
- h) Establish appropriate mechanisms for scientific and ethical oversight of health research, including clinical trial, regulation, sensitization of the people on their roles, rights and obligations in matters of health research;
- i) Monitor and systematically evaluate and review health research systems by developing appropriate health research registries and indicators;
- j) Allocate at least 2% of national health expenditures and at least 5% of health external project and programme aid to research and research capacity building; and invest more on research aimed at improving health systems.
- k) Create and strengthen an environment that attracts the best minds, for example, by providing attractive career structures and incentives, by facilitating access to information and by offering the persons concerned opportunities to teach, do research and participate in communities of practice;
- l) Develop a critical mass of focal persons and well-trained national researchers including those working abroad in various disciplines and areas of health research, including ethics and regulation;
- m) Support the translation of research results into policy and action by creating appropriate mechanisms and structures, including promoting networks of researchers, decision-makers and policy-makers for evidence-based public health action;
- n) Continue to promote innovative research directed towards discoveries in basic knowledge and its transformation into new tools such as drugs, vaccines and diagnostics;
- o) Implement operational research to assess how discoveries might be optimally utilized and strategically implemented to ensure enhanced access;
- p) Develop and strengthen the national health information system by instituting procedures that ensure the generation and availability of information that conforms to international norms and standards and by defining clear relations between the various sub-systems, as well as the mechanisms needed for regular sub-system evaluation;
- q) Identify and integrate the various sources of information into national information systems taking into account the private sector so as to generate accurate and reliable information;
- r) Acquire information and communication technologies and make them accessible to all sources and potential users of information, in order to have up-to-date evidence for health research development.
- s) Prepare national strategic directions for knowledge management, including ehealth, ensuring that they are integrated as a priority into national health policies and plans;
- t) Establish norms and standards, including ethical ones, taking into account new technologies and approaches to knowledge management;
- u) Strengthen national capacity in knowledge management;
- v) Adopt policies that promote the application of intellectual property rights in favour of the public in North-South and public-private research partnerships so as to enhance accessibility of research results;

3. Call upon researchers, research institutions and research and information network to:

- a) Become more actively engaged with all stakeholders in setting research priorities;

- b) Enhance the relevance of research to users, policy-makers and communities by linking research activities to health challenges and priorities in order to bridge the know-do gap;

4. Urge national and international partners including the private sector, civil society, and regional economic communities, to do everything possible, in keeping with the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, to:

- a) Support country policies and mechanisms to honour the aforementioned commitments;
- b) Promote equitable South-South and North-South cooperation, technology transfer and collaboration for health research, and the establishment and strengthening of knowledge management capacities and practices;
- c) Invest at least 5% of health project and programme aid in health research and capacity building with emphasis on implementation of health policies and system strengthening ;

5. Call upon the African Union and regional economic communities to:

Advocate for strengthening health research systems and to encourage regional cooperation;

6. Request the World Health Organization to:

- a) Advocate for increased funding from governments and development partners for strengthening health research, information and knowledge systems,
- b) Support Member States to build national health research systems, develop capacity to conduct health research, identify health research priorities, evaluate research results and use acquired knowledge to solve health problems by following evidence-informed policies;
- c) Facilitate regional, South-South and cross-border collaboration and networks to strengthen the creation, sharing and use of knowledge to improve the health status of the people;
- d) Establish an African Health Research, Information and Knowledge Systems Observatory (AHRO);
- e) Increase the WHO Health research budget and explore innovative financing mechanisms for supporting Member States to strengthen their health research, information and knowledge systems;
- f) Support the establishment of sub regional and regional center of excellence in research for health;
- g) Support the development of a framework for implementing the Declaration before presentation of the same to the fifty-ninth session of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa.
- h) Submit the present Declaration to the WHO Regional Committee.

Done at Algiers this twenty-sixth day of June in the year 2008