



African Union



NEPAD Planning and
Coordinating Agency (NPCA)

Statement made at the Southern African Centre for Infectious Diseases Surveillance (SACIDS) Board Meeting held in Lusaka Zambia 6-8 May 2010

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1.0 Preamble

- The Vice Chancellor, University of Zambia, Prof. Stephen Simukanga
- SACIDS Executive Director, Prof. Mark Rweyemamu
- International Partners
- Dean, School of Veterinary Medicine & Coordinator Zambia NatCIDS – Dr. Aaron Mweene
- Distinguished invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen
- All Protocols observed

I bring you warm greetings from:

- the CEO of the NEPAD Agency, his Excellency Dr. Mayaki
- the Director of Policy and Programme Development Directorate , Prof Aggrey Ambali
- and the entire team of the office of the NEPAD Agency Regional Coordinator for Southern Africa

On behalf of NEPAD Agency, I would like to point out right from the start that we are thankful to the management of SACIDS in particular, the CEO, Prof. Rweyemamu for inviting us to this event.

I would also like to extend our appreciation to the University of Zambia administration for the facilitation provided in hosting this Board meeting.

2.0 NEPAD Planning and Coordination Agency

Ladies and gentlemen, I would be failing in my duties if I did not take this opportunity to inform you about the transformation that has taken place at NEPAD. The 14th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union (AU) held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in February 2010 adopted the Decision on the integration of the NEPAD into the structures and processes of the AU. This included the establishment of the NEPAD Planning and Coordination Agency (NPCA) as a technical body of the AU to replace the NEPAD Secretariat. The Assembly further mandated NEPAD to facilitate and coordinate the implementation of continental and regional priority programmes and projects and to mobilise resources and partners in support of their implementation. Under the new mandate, NEPAD

will also conduct and coordinate research and knowledge management, monitor and evaluate the implementation of programmes and advocate on the AU and NEPAD vision, mission and core values.

3.0 Health Challenges in Africa

Africa is confronted by a very high disease burden with infectious diseases taking a heavy toll on people's health. These infectious diseases have also a serious socio-economic impact on the continent. Yet Africa is suffering by lack of drugs for Neglected Diseases, access to essential medicines, and enabling and coherent Policy environments that would enhance the availability of and accessibility to essential medicines for neglected and emerging infectious diseases. Africa is also characterized by lack of incentives and partnerships needed to foster innovation and scale-up research on neglected and emerging infectious diseases that affect its people and lack of human, infrastructure and regulatory capacity on health research and pharmaceuticals innovation.

Research is a key driver of technical and socio-economical development in low and middle-income countries worldwide. However, its potential is not fully realized in African countries. Health research is essential for pharmaceutical and technical innovations, improving the performance of health systems, controlling epidemics of acute and chronic conditions, measuring impact of interventions and giving timely warning of potential environmental threats and risk factors. The new concept of 'Research for Health' – adopted by Ministers of Health at the Bamako 2008 Ministerial Forum – emphasizes a multi-sectoral approach in the use of research to improve health, health equity and development of countries. Unfortunately, many African countries lack the structures, infrastructure and mechanisms to exercise appropriate governance and management of research in general and of health research in particular. This is one of major reasons for the continent's continuing weakness in this area. Therefore, without credible sets of research priorities which are regularly updated and communicated widely; without research policy frameworks that support scientific excellence and relevance; and without effective management mechanisms which can be used by African governments and research institutions to negotiate with external research partners and initiatives, it will be difficult to imagine real countries' ownership of research programs being undertaken in Africa.

The importance of investing in Health research for development is widely recognized since the report of the Commission on Health Research for Development in 1990 (Commission on Health Research for Development. Health research essential link to equity in development. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 1990. <http://www.cohred.org/Assests/PDF/Papers/ComReports.pdf>). Since then, this core message has been echoed by many reports, declarations, and communiqués in Africa, and by development partners and others. While global health research expenditure has been increasing rapidly over the past decade, it is mostly channeled through international partnerships and northern institutions. This practice has not enabled African governments and research institutions to develop appropriate governance management or 'ownership' of the research activities conducted in their countries. Nor do these investments build the capacity of African researchers and institutions beyond what is needed to conduct 'projects'

The good news is that there are good reasons for us to be optimistic.

1. Increased awareness and political will on the continent

African governments have taken in recent years significant steps to seriously address their health challenges and access to medicines. For instance, in 2005, AU Conference of Health

Ministers in Gaborone adopted a clear policy position: *‘to pursue, with the support of our partners, the local production of generic medicines on the continent and to make full use of flexibilities within the Trade and Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and DOHA Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health’*. In addition, in 2007, the AU adopted the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa (PMPA) and established a Technical Committee to undertake technical development of these efforts.

2. Increased awareness at the global level

At global level, awareness on the need to improve access to affordable essential medical products for vulnerable populations has gradually increased over the past decade. Due to challenges by the unprecedented burden of HIV/AIDS and the pressure exerted by civil society for increasing access to antiretroviral medicines, the international community has started to negotiate new rules and develop new mechanisms for improving the accessibility to essential drugs and products, which are increasingly considered as global public goods. That is why, in May 2008, the World Health Assembly adopted ‘The Global Strategy and Plan of Action on Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property’ (GSPA). This is one of the most recent and important attempts to globally foster innovation and address the challenge of enabling developing countries to access the drugs they badly need.

Therefore, broadly speaking, solutions to health challenges confronting Africa are located in scientific and technological developments as well as related emerging institutional arrangements. **As such African countries and institutions such as SACIDS have to take leadership in generating and utilizing technology and innovations in health that address diseases peculiar to the continent.**

4.0 NEPAD AGENCY HEALTH STRATEGY

That is why at the NEPAD Agency, we would like to see African countries improve their South-South and North-South cooperation and stimulate policies that would encourage northern science and industry to more rapidly develop and deliver medicines, diagnosis and vaccines for neglected and emerging infectious diseases. We wish also to see that countries are implementing both the African Union Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan and the WHO Global Strategy and Plan of Action on Public Health Innovation and Intellectual Property Right. The focus of NEPAD in the Health is to establish projects in line with the emerging mandate of the NPCA. Given the accelerated harmonization and integration of sector work programme with the AUC, advocacy on key African health issues and solutions will emphasise on:

Human Resources for Health: Objective is to address health workforce crisis in Africa. Through this programme NEPAD Agency Chairs the African Platform on Human Resources for Health Organization and in this regard has facilitated the establishment of a Secretariat which is being hosted by the WHO sub-regional office in Harare.

Pharmaceuticals: NEPAD’s work in pharmaceuticals is within the framework of the AU Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan and it has a two-pronged approach namely,

- strengthening the registration of medicines and harmonization of regulations for the same
- technology transfer for the production of pharmaceuticals in Africa

Research, knowledge Management and Advocacy: This Partnership programme is aimed at strengthening national health research governance in Africa.

NEPAD has also established four Centres of excellence in biosciences across Africa- to tackle challenges confronting the continent including health:

- Southern Africa Network for Biosciences (SANBio)
- *Biosciences Eastern and Central Africa (BecANet)*
- *West Africa Biosciences Network (WABNet)*
- *North Africa Biosciences Network (NABNet)*

Each of these centres has programmes on health. For example, SANBio has ongoing project on livestock diseases with UNZA (Vet School) and NISIR.

5.0 How do we see SACIDS?

As NEPAD we strongly value the niche that SACIDS has found for itself in the sub-region. We see SACIDS as one of the emerging champions for Health research capacity development in health related matters in SADC. Last night I was browsing through the SACIDS Website and came across your vision and mission statements. Your Mission Statement reads as follows and I Quote: “ *To harness innovation in S & T in order to improve southern Africa’s capacity to detect, identify and monitor infectious diseases of humans, animals (and progressively also plants) and their interactions in order to better manage the risk posed by them*”, end of Quote.

I also came across the SACIDS Philosophy which reads “***Working for One Africa, One Health.***”

These important statements and aspirations are all in tandem with those of the AUC/NEPAD Agency Strategy on Health. This means that there is a lot of scope for collaboration between NEPAD and SACIDS. We as AU/NEPAD are therefore keen to explore how best we can develop this collaborate with you. We would like in this regard to revitalise our discussions with SACIDS to develop an MoU between our two institutions. We started these discussions in August 2009 when Prof. Rweyemamu and his team visited my office in Pretoria. We are still keen to pursue this idea.

Again on behalf of NEPAD Agency, I would like to thank SACIDS for extending an invitation to us and we look forward to working with you.

I thank you.
