



THE SUSTAINABLE
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PRESS RELEASE

THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS CENTER CONFERENCE

Every Life Matters: Building and Strengthening Accountability in African Health Systems

**Radisson Blu Hotel and Convention Centre
8 – 9 March 2018
Kigali, Rwanda**

KIGALI – The Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa (SDGC/A) conference entitled: Every Life Matters: Building and Strengthening Accountability in African Health Systems was held at Radisson Blu Hotel & Convention Centre, Kigali from 8th to 9th March 2018. The conference convened stakeholders to galvanize greater accountability and call for commitments and actions by all political and government actors and other leaders in the healthcare sector to deliver.

The main purpose of the conference was to commence the discussion on defining the accountability framework necessary to achieve SDG 3 in Africa. Bringing together over 500 delegates from 41 countries in Africa and beyond, the conference was officially launched by Honorable Ambassador Claver Gatete, Minister of Finance of the Republic of Rwanda and featured opening address statements from Dr. Takao Toda (Vice President for Human Security and Global Health, JICA), Ms. Zouera Youssoufou (Chief Executive Officer, Dangote Foundation), and Honorable Dr. Diane Gashumba (Minister of Health for Rwanda). During the conference, the key stakeholders and partners in health, particularly Ministers of Health, Finance and Justice galvanized greater accountability and call for commitments and actions by all political and government actors and other leaders in the healthcare sector to deliver equitable, safe, affordable and quality health services across Africa. The participants included Ministries of Health, Ministries of Finance and Economic Planning, Ministries of Justice; health professionals, and representatives of health associations, councils and research centers in Africa and worldwide.

The Every Life Matters conference galvanized greater accountability and encouraged governments and health professionals to deliver by calling for commitments and actions by all political and government actors and other leaders in the healthcare sector to enact and enforce a standard regulatory system that facilitates and ensures true accountability in the health system. In addition, the meeting encouraged stakeholders to place ethical standards at the center of the quality of care offering and create greater awareness in the public of their inherent human right to health and along with that, the right they have to hold health officials and practitioners, at all levels, accountable.



During the welcoming remarks Dr Belay Begashaw, Director General of the SDGC/A, stressed the importance of the Every Life Matters conference as “now is the time for us to critically look at the root causes for deaths and to urgently address the whole issue of accountability. To do this, we need to assess the entire health care system in order to: determine the weak links, establish the facts and reasons for success, establish the root cause for failure, and draw useful lessons and help avoid such negatives in future undertakings.” Dr. Begashaw noted that the conference will enable delegates to “pin-point the root causes of system failure, to enable remedial measures to be undertaken” rather than apportioning blames to the various players in the entire system (e.g. health care professionals, government leaders, etc.). “In order for the health indicators to improve in a sustainable manner, countries, particularly those in Sub-Saharan Africa, need strong institutions, good governance and accountability systems, which will enable the health systems and service delivery to reach impactful, optimum and efficient levels as set by the SDGs” Dr. Begashaw said. The Director General noted that this can be achieved through the creation of an “overarching accountability framework for healthcare” as such comprehensive framework should be one that is “implemented, enforced, known and understood by all citizens.”

Following the welcoming remarks, Dr. Takao Toda, Vice President for Human Security and Global Health for JICA noted that “the first and the most important accountability is the people’s accountability to the people themselves. The second is accountability by hospitals and doctors to the people. The third accountability is the government’s accountability to the people.” Dr. Toda noted that with the use of ICT it will be possible to easily share wisdom, lessons learned, success stories and failures in order to improve accountability in the African health systems; as well as global and African development toward complete Universal Healthcare.

Ms. Zuera Youssoufou, Chief Executive Officer of the Dangote Foundation, said that a strong and effective regulatory framework will ensure that all culprits of medical negligence are held accountable. Ms. Youssoufou noted that “governments should set up the right regulatory frameworks and continue to mobilize resources internationally and domestically for health services, but they need to recognize the potential of the private sector considering that they cover the health services of the majority of the population. The private sector can contribute to improved health systems through investing in product development (i.e. pharmaceutical products, health insurance products, technology, hospitals, setting up food industries that provide nutritious food, and even medical schools, etc.). Governments and other shareholders need to come up with innovative and appropriate financing models that will work for the private sector in the face of a well-known fact that there is a well-known gap to fund the African health system and that a significant size of the population cannot yet access necessary health services.”

Honorable Dr. Diane Gashumba, Minister of Health of the Republic of Rwanda stated that SDG3 demands to achieve Universal Health Coverage. In order for this to be attained, there is a need for “highly functioning health systems that must be developed and strengthened” across Africa. Honorable Dr. Gashumba highlighted that “SDG3 also aspires to ensure health and well-being for all including a bold commitment to end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other



communicable diseases by 2030. It also aims to provide access to safe and effective medicines and vaccines for all. Supporting research and availing data are important in enabling governments, international organizations, civil society, private sector and the general public to make informed decisions and to ensure the accountability of representative bodies. Through regular reporting structures, performance review, and patient data analysis, we can begin to shape our Health System to be accountable for itself.”

During the keynote address, Honorable Ambassador Claver Gatete, Minister of Finance and Economic Planning of the Republic of Rwanda stated “given the near universal coverage of the population with basic health services in Rwanda, much attention is shifting towards the need to improve the quality of services offered including specialized treatment and care across the country. With the improvements in health outcomes and livelihoods, citizens are increasingly demanding better services and more accountability. Meeting their needs requires significant investments in: human resources, equipment, infrastructure and systems. We therefore need to come up with strong strategies to mobilize sufficient resources to ensure adequate financing.” In addition, the Honorable Minister highlighted that it is important to consider that technology can play an enhanced role in driving accountability. “The world is increasingly moving towards a technologically driven, digital economy with multiple opportunities and efficiencies arising from adoption of technologies (such as drones) and scale up of broadband. There are many areas to be explored in this regard including: the modernization of health systems to improve and scale up service delivery, the digitization of health services, the delivery of health services in remote places, among others” Honorable Ambassador Gatete said.

During the conference proceedings, the opening high-level panel discussion brought together a range of dynamic speakers, health professionals and representatives of African medical networks, councils and research centers to address the ways in which we could build an overarching accountability framework for healthcare that will underpin the transformational change required in the healthcare system throughout Africa by 2030. Furthermore, the discussions examined how political and government actors as well as leaders in the healthcare sector can enact and enforce a standard regulatory system that facilitates and ensures true accountability in the health system. Moreover, the panel explored how ethical standards can be placed at the center of the quality of care offering and various methods that can be used to create greater awareness in the public of human rights to health and holding health officials and practitioners at all levels accountable in order for health in Africa to reach standards and levels of the rest of the world.

Following the opening panel discussion, three thematic sessions focused on three themes of accountability:

1. Building effective accountability framework to ensure optimal functioning of the health systems in Africa
2. Engender efficient, strong and long-lasting health accountability mechanisms in Africa using data, research and development.
3. Establishing appropriate solutions and other accountability mechanisms to ensure proper functioning of healthcare systems in Africa



The conclusions and resolutions of the conference from participants of Ministries of Health, Ministries of Finance and Economic Planning, Ministries of Justice; health professionals, and representatives of health associations, councils and research centers were adopted into the Call to Action which indicates that it is time for Africa to focus urgently and seriously on building effective, rigorous and responsible health systems with the help of strong and effective partnerships coupled with modern technological advancements. Therefore, the conference was able to address the critical health system issues that are necessary to achieve the SDG Agenda 2030, as well as Africa's Agenda 2063; as building and strengthening African health system accountability is critical to building the health system required for Africa to meet SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being.

The SDGC/A Commits to provide the technical support to governments of the African Continent in order to follow up on the implementation and realization of the Call to Action, which mainly communicates a call for urgency to focus on building effective and accountable health systems. The Center further commits to working with Government ministries, WHO, the African Union and other stakeholders to establish and adopt a comprehensive Pan African Health System Accountability Action Plan by Mid-2019. The Center is also ready to follow and speed up the process in due course through collaboration with all stakeholders involved in the African healthcare systems.

For more information visit www.sdgc africa.org/everylifematters

About SDGC/A

The Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa (SDGC/A) is an autonomous international organization, that provides technical support, and expertise as input to national governments, private sector, civil society, academic institutions to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda across Africa. The SDGC/A builds upon the existing successes of the African continent by bringing together people, ideas, and innovation from across the world to collectively build a more sustainable future.

For more information about SDGC/A and its work visit: www.sdgc africa.org
