Memorandum of Understanding formalizes and deepens cooperation between the organizations

GENEVA—Today the African Union (AU) Commission and the World Health Organization (WHO) signed an historic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) cementing their mutual commitment to expand and deepen their relationship and cooperation.

The document was signed at WHO Headquarters by His Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairman of the African Union Commission, and Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization.

This significant commitment to global health follows the political declaration on universal health coverage (UHC), approved by all 193 UN Member States at the United Nations General Assembly in September, and the adoption of a global resolution to translate that political commitment into reality by legislators from 140 countries shortly thereafter.

The Memorandum between the AU Commission and WHO specifies three key areas of collaboration:

- Providing technical expertise to the African Medicines Agency (AMA) and creating an enabling environment to foster local production of medicines. Access to medicines that are high-quality, safe and effective is a core pillar of UHC. WHO welcomes the African Union's decision to endorse the treaty establishing the AMA and stands ready to provide high-quality technical expertise.
- Strengthening collaboration between the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) and WHO, with a particular focus on emergency preparedness, to build AU Member States' defenses against epidemics and other health emergencies. WHO will also support efforts to strengthen the health workforce in AU countries, and to establish the African Volunteer Health Corps.
- Supporting the implementation of the Addis Ababa Call to Action on universal health coverage and the AU Declaration on Domestic Financing. Endorsed by the African Union Summit earlier this year, the Call to Action is a commitment by African Union countries to increase domestic investment in health, and to be accountable for that commitment. WHO will facilitate a dialogue between Health and Finance Ministers to help countries develop strong and sustainable health financing models.

The African Union plays a crucial role in supporting greater cohesion among AU Member States across a range of policy areas and programmes. Through this Memorandum WHO aims to reinvigorate, expand, and deepen its relationship with the AU towards achievement of WHO's five-year strategy (the 13th General Programme of Work, 2019-2023), and the health and development objectives of the African Union.

The MoU comes at a critical time in the drive towards universal health coverage.
Speaking at the signing ceremony, Chairman Mahamat and Dr Tedros expressed a shared view that this deepened partnership will help to facilitate the necessary political support, and implementation of country-level interventions, needed to improve the health and well-being of people across the African continent.