

Africa commits to WHO access to medicine goals

Access to medicines is at the core of universal health coverage (UHC), one of World Health Organisation's main priorities, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite progress in access to treatment and prevention for some diseases in recent years, many countries are still struggling to provide full access to the health products their populations need.



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In addition, the rise in non-communicable diseases (such as cancer and diabetes), under-resourced health systems and the high cost of new medical products are undermining governments' commitments to reduce out-of-pocket (OOP) expenditure on medicines and other health services.

Ministers of health from the WHO African region have endorsed proposals within the Roadmap for Access 2019-2030 aimed at addressing the shortage of, and access to, medicines and vaccines.

"The high cost of medicines means that people cannot afford the medicines they need to stay alive and healthy. We will only achieve universal health coverage if we can ensure affordable access to quality medical products for our populations," said Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO regional director for Africa.

Strong pharmaceutical policies

"This will require an integrated and sustained effort based on stronger pharmaceutical policies, better quality oversight of medical products and greater community participation so that we can ensure we are meeting the needs of people. The roadmap provides us with a strong basis to start this work."

Delegates at the meeting agreed to strengthen collaboration on health products procurement to reduce prices, on collaborative approaches to assessing medical products so as to cut costs, and on promoting medical research and development that responds to the public health needs of low- and middle-income countries. The roadmap also highlights more responsible use of medicines, especially of antimicrobials, and better monitoring of access to medicines.

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