

EAST, CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN AFRICA HEALTH COMMUNITY

Fostering Regional Cooperation for Better Health



74th HEALTH MINISTERS CONFERENCE PROGRAME

10 - 12 February 2025 Umodzi Park Hotel, Lilongwe - Malawi



















ABOUT MALAWI



Takulandirani! a warm welcome

Malawi is a landlocked country in southeastern Africa, bordered by Zambia to the west, Tanzania to the north and northeast, and Mozambique to the east, south, and southwest. The country covers approximately 118,484 square kilometers, with Lake Malawi—one of Africa's largest and deepest lakes—occupying about 20% of its total area. Malawi has a population of about 20 million people, with Lilongwe as its capital city and Blantyre as its commercial hub. The country is renowned for its warm hospitality, earning it the nickname "The Warm Heart of Africa."

Malawi is not only "The Warm Heart of Africa", but also the genuinely friendly, safe and in many ways undiscovered heart of Africa – an exclusive destination that is just that little bit different from its better-known neighbours. Malawi's unique selling point is the sheer variety of things to see and do in a comparatively confined area. Tourism is a key sector, with Lake Malawi National Park (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), Mount Mulanje, and Liwonde National Park being major attractions.

The economy is largely agrarian, with tobacco, tea, and sugar as major exports. Malawi's health sector has made significant strides, especially in HIV/AIDS control, maternal health, and immunization coverage, but still faces challenges such as high disease burdens and limited healthcare infrastructure. The country is also vulnerable to climate change impacts, including droughts and floods, which affect both agriculture and public health. Despite these challenges, Malawi continues to implement health system strengthening programs and economic reforms to enhance its development trajectory.

We warmly welcome all our esteemed guests to Malawi, the Warm Heart of Africa. Wishing you a successful conference in Malawi. Enjoy the hospitality, rich culture, and scenic beauty of this incredible country

Zikomo kwambiri! (Thank you very much!)

MESSAGE FROM THE GUEST OF HONOUR



Honourable Ministers and Distinguished Participants,

It is both a privilege and an honor for the Republic of Malawi to host the 74th Health Ministers Conference, the highest governing body of the East, Central, and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA). We gather here in the heart of Africa, a place rich in culture and warmth, to engage in meaningful discussions and collaboration.

I extend a heartfelt welcome to each of you. Your presence signifies our collective commitment to

advancing health across our region. Today's theme, "Looking Ahead After the Golden Jubilee," invites us to not only celebrate our achievements but also to envision a promising future. Together, we have made remarkable progress in healthcare, yet significant challenges remain.

We must focus on critical areas such as managing health emergencies, enhancing maternal and child health, addressing the dual burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases, and striving for universal health coverage. To achieve these goals, we must strengthen our health systems, invest in the training of our healthcare workforce, and build local manufacturing capabilities to ensure sustainability. Furthermore, integrating robust health data systems and developing innovative financing strategies are essential for our progress.

Let us seize this opportunity to collaborate and embrace our shared purpose as we work towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This conference provides a platform for us to share experiences and best practices, recognizing that our contexts and challenges are often similar.

I would like to commend the Ministry of Health of Malawi and the East Central and Southern Africa Health Community Secretariat for convening this conference.

Thank you for your commitment to improving health in our region. I wish you fruitful meeting and productive del.

Right Honourable Dr. Michael Bizwick Usi Vice President of the Republic of Malawi

MESSAGE FROM THE HMC CHAIR



Dear Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, and Esteemed Partners.

It is my great honor to welcome you to the 74th Health Ministers Conference (HMC) of the East, Central, and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC), taking place in Lilongwe, Malawi. This year's gathering marks a critical moment as we transition from celebrating our Golden Jubilee to implementing the ECSA-HC Health Strategic Plan (2024-2034)—a roadmap for a healthier, more resilient region.

Under the theme, "Looking Ahead Post the Golden Jubilee," we stand at the intersection of reflection

and action. Over the past five decades, ECSA-HC has been instrumental in shaping regional health policies, strengthening systems, and fostering collaboration among our member states. Now, our focus must shift towards accelerating Universal Health Coverage (UHC), combating Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), strengthening health financing, and enhancing resilience to future health challenges.

As we engage in high-level discussions, let us seize this opportunity to forge sustainable partnerships, share best practices, and commit to actionable solutions that will transform healthcare delivery across our nations. The challenges ahead demand collective commitment, innovation, and leadership, and I am confident that the deliberations from this conference will yield impactful resolutions for the well-being of our populations.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the Government and the people of Malawi for their warm hospitality and steadfast commitment to regional health advancement. I also recognize the invaluable contributions of our development partners, experts, and stakeholders, whose dedication continues to drive progress in our shared mission.

Let us work together, with renewed vigor and unity, to shape a future where every individual in our region enjoys access to quality healthcare. I wish you all a productive and insightful conference.

Hon. Selibe Mochoboroane Minister of Health, Kingdom of Lesotho Chairperson, Health Ministers Conference (HMC)

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL



Dear Excellencies, Esteemed Delegates, Partners, and Distinguished Guests

On behalf of the East, Central, and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC), it is my great pleasure to welcome you to the 74th Health Ministers Conference (HMC), to be held at the Umodzi Park Hotel in Lilongwe, Malawi, from February 10th to 12th, 2025. This year's conference is preceded by two days of pre-conference events, scheduled for February 8th and 9th, offering a unique opportunity to engage in thematic discussions, build networks, and set the stage for the main conference.

Themed "Looking Ahead Post the Golden Jubilee," the 74th HMC represents a vital opportunity to reflect on the milestones of ECSA-HC's 50 years of progress while setting a forward-looking agenda for health in the region. This year's conference will address essential priorities to strengthen health systems, improve health outcomes, and enhance resilience in the face of future challenges.

We are deeply honored to hold this important gathering in Malawi, a country renowned for its dedication to improving health and well-being. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Government and the people of Malawi for graciously hosting this conference and for their unwavering commitment to regional health collaboration.

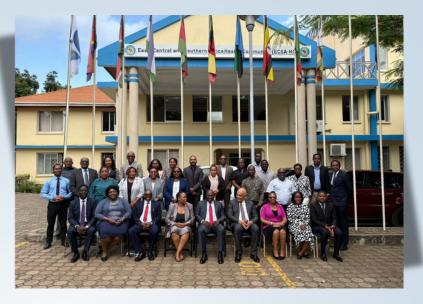
As we convene in Lilongwe, I encourage all participants to engage fully in the discussions, share insights, and collaborate in shaping a healthier future for the region. Your active participation is essential to the success of this conference, and I am confident that together we will achieve meaningful outcomes that will benefit the health and well-being of our populations.

I look forward to welcoming you all in Lilongwe and wish you a productive and enriching conference experience.

Mr. Sibusiso Sibandze Ag. Director General

ABOUT ECSA-HC

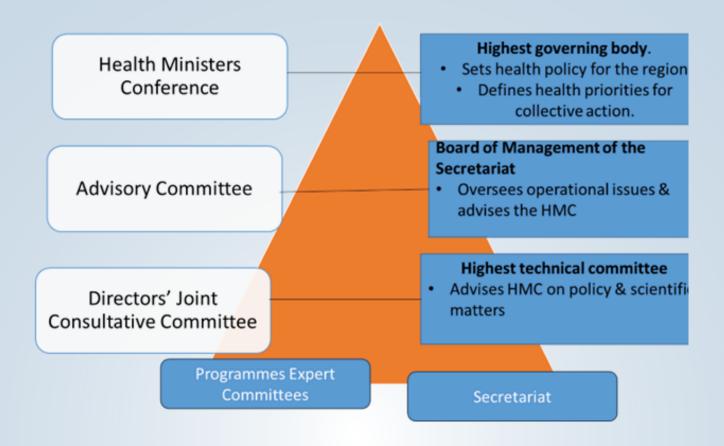
The East, Central and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC) is a regional intergovernmental organization dedicated to improving health outcomes across its member states: Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Recognising that the diseases know no borders, ECSA-HC has also been working collaboratively with other neighbouring countries to advance the health agenda in the region.



The organization was established in in 1974 under the auspies of Commonwealth Secretariat to foster regional cooperation in health.

ECSA-HC is governed by several key organs that ensure effective oversight and strategic direction. At the apex is the Conference of Health Ministers, comprising the Ministers of Health from member states, which sets strategic priorities, endorses policies, and aligns ECSA-HC's initiatives with regional and international health agendas. The Advisory Committee that consists of the Permanent/Principal Secretaries and serves as the Management Board to oversee the operational issues and offer advise to the HMC. The Directors Joint Consultative Committee (DJCC), made up of Directors/Director Generals of Health Services, Deans of Medical Schools and Heads of Research Institutions in the member states senior health officials, provides technical guidance to the Conference of Health Ministers.

ECSA-HC areas of support include policy and strategies harmonization, health workforce development, disease control and prevention, health systems strengthening, maternal and child health, non-communicable diseases (NCDs), nutrition and food security, research, health information systems and knowledge management among other technical areas implemented through four cluster areas namely: (1) Health Systems and Capacity Development; (2) Family Health and Infectious Diseases; (3) NCDs, Food Security and Nutrition; and (4)Knowledge Management and Monitoring and Evaluation.



ECSA-HC collaborates with a range of partners, including regional organizations such as the East African Community (EAC), African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC); international donors like the Global Fund, World Bank, USAID, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as collaborating partners such as the World Health Organization (WHO), Africa CDC, ASLM, Amref Health Africa, IGAD and other various development and implementing partners. These collaborations enhance the reach and impact of ECSA-HC's health initiatives, ensuring sustainable health development and improved well-being across the region.

ABOUT THE 74th HEALTH MINISTERS' CONFERENCE



The 74th Health Ministers Conference (HMC) of the East, Central, and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC) will be held from February 10-12, 2024, at the Umodzi Park Hotel in Lilongwe, Malawi, under the theme: "Looking Ahead Post the Golden Jubilee."

This year's conference marks a pivotal moment as ECSA-HC transitions from celebrating its 50th anniversary to implementing

the newly developed ECSA-HC Health Strategic Plan (2024-2034). The 74th HMC will provide a platform for regional dialogue, collaboration, and the sharing of best practices, with an emphasis on advancing universal health coverage, strengthening health systems, promoting health equity, and enhancing resilience to future health challenges. The conference aims to bring together governments, development partners, and other stakeholders to discuss innovative solutions and secure commitments to improve health outcomes across the region. The following are the technical areas of focus in the 74th Health Ministers Conference: -

- Promoting Universal Health Coverage (UHC)
- Addressing Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and Mental Health
- Advancing Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH)
- Health Financing and Governance
- Capacity Building and Health Workforce Development
- Enhancing diagnostic capacities
- Utilization of data for health solutions
- Addressing Health Emergencies, infectious diseases and resilience
- Engagement with partners in driving the regional health agenda

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Pre-conferences: Sunday, 9 February 2025

1. Pre-conference 1: ECSACONM - Accelerating the development of perioperative skills training (Intuitive Foundation)
2. Pre-conference 2: Transforming political commitments on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) into action

Day I: Monday, 10th February 2025	
Time & Session chair	Activity
08:00 - 09:00	Registration
09:00 - 11:00 Lesotho	Official Opening Ceremony Remarks by the Acting Director General, ECSA-HC, Mr Sibusiso Sibandze Remarks by the Advisory Committee Chairperson, Dr. Samson Mndolo Remarks by Collaborating Partners Remarks by the Chairperson of the Health Ministers Conference, Hon. Selibe Mochoboroane, Kingdom of Lesotho Remarks by Hon. Minister of Health, Republic of Malawi, Hon. Khumbize Kandodo Chiponda, MP and introduction of the Guest of Honour Keynote Address by the Guest of Honour, Right Honourable Dr. Michael Bizwick Usi, Vice President of the Republic of Malawi
11:00 - 11:30	TEA BREAK & GROUP PHOTO
11:30 - 13:00 Lesotho	Plenary session I: Progress on Building Capacity on Health Emergencies, Response and Resilience • Presentation by ECSA-HC on the current outbreaks in the region and advances in Pandemic Preparedness and Response (15 minutes) • Statements from Member States (3 minutes each) • Plenary
13:00 - 14:00	LUNCH

14:00 - 15:00 Malawi	 Plenary Session 2: Progress on the Health of Women, Children and Adolescents in the ECSA Region Statement by the Hon Minister of Health- United Republic of Tanzania Highlights of Tanzania's progress in reducing maternal and child mortality and morbidity (10 minutes) Adolescents and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health (AYSRH) HMC Resolutions in Action - Progress and Future Directions (Amref Health Africa) (10 minutes) Early Childhood Development (AFECN) (10 minutes) Safer Births Bundle of Care (SBBC) - Laerdal Global Health (10 minutes) Paediatric surgery in the ECSA region (Kids Operating room) - (10 minutes) Plenary
15:00 - 16:00 Malawi	Plenary session 3: Progress in responding to Communicable Diseases in the ECSA Region • Statement by the Hon Minister of Health- Kingdom of Eswatini Progress and Challenges in Achieving the Global Targets for Ending Communicable Diseases: The case of Eswatini (10 minutes) • Summary of Resolutions from UNGA and Global Ministerial Summit on AMR (Africa CDC/ECSA-HC) (10 minutes) • Plenary
16:00-16:30	TEA BREAK
16:30-17:30 Kenya	Plenary Session 4: Towards Universal Health Coverage in challenging geographical contexts • Statement by the Hon. Minister of Health- Kingdom of Lesotho Bringing health services closer to the people - Lessons from the Kingdom of Lesotho (10 minutes) • Statements from Member States (3 minutes each) • Community health as a catalyst for change in achieving UHC: Living goods (10 minutes) • Plenary
19:00-22:00	Cocktail reception
	END OF DAY 1

Day 2: Tuesday, 11 Febr	uary 2025
08:30-09:30 Zimbabwe	Plenary Session 5: Combating Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) in the ECSA region • Statement by the Hon Minister of Health- Malawi Lessons learnt along the path towards disease elimination: The case of trachoma elimination in Malawi (10 minutes) • Statements by Member States (3 minutes each) • Presentation by Uniting to Combat NTDs (10 minutes) • Plenary
09:30 - 11:00 Zimbabwe	Plenary Session 6: Investing in the Health Workforce in the ECSA-HC region • Statement by the Hon Minister of Health- Zambia Progress made in addressing the Human Resources for Health crisis in Zambia (10 minutes) • Evidence from the Health Labour Market Analysis conducted in ECSA-HC Member States: What are the implications on implementation of the African Charter on Health Workforce Investment? (WHO-AFRO) (10 minutes) • Progress report on scaling up the Collegiate Model of Learning: Challenges and Opportunities (ECSA College of Health Sciences) (10 minutes) • Plenary
11:00 - 11:30	TEA BREAK
11:30 - 13:00 Mauritius	Plenary Session 7: High Level Ministerial Session on NCDs and Mental Health Overview of the NCDs and Mental Health in the ECSA-HC region (ECSA-HC Secretariat) (10 minutes) HPV prevention and cervical cancer management - updated from HPV World Bank Gates project (World Bank/Country) (10 minutes) Statement by a Youth Advocate on Adolescent Mental Health (Commonwealth Youth Forum) (10 minutes) Ministerial Panel discussion on Mental Health (60 minutes) Discussants: 1. Hon. Minister of Health Mauritius 2. Hon. Minister of Health Eswatini 3. Hon. Cabinet Secretary of Health Kenya 4. Hon. Minister of Health Tanzania 5. Hon. Minister of Health Malawi Moderator: Dr. Jones Masiye - Manager NFSN, ECSA-HC

13:00 - 14:00	LUNCH
14:00-15:30 Tanzania	Plenary Session 8: Health Financing in the ECSA region - The Africa Leadership Meeting (ALM) commitments to increasing domestic investment in health • Statement by the Hon Minister of Health - Mauritius Advances towards increasing domestic investments in health: the case of Mauritius (10 minutes) • Statements by Member States (3 Minutes each) • ECSA-HC support to countries towards achievement of ALM commitments: The example of the Thanzi La Onse Project (TLO) (10 minutes) • Plenary
15:30-16:00	TEA BREAK
16:00 - 17:00 Uganda	 Plenary Session 9: Progress on Integrating Regional Health Data in the ECSA Region Statement by the Hon Minister of Health- Zimbabwe Progress towards health digitization: Lessons from operationalizing the Cross-Border Referral System (CBRS) and the TB Dashboard in Zimbabwe (10 minutes) Building Future-Ready Health Systems: AI Solutions for Population Health and Resilience - Qure.ai (10 minutes) Monitoring progress on implementation of HMC resolutions: An example of TB data (10 minutes) Plenary
17:15 - 19:15	Closed Session of the Health Ministers Conference
19:30-22:00	Dinner hosted by Minister of Health, Republic of Malawi
	END OF DAY 2

Day 3: Wednesday, 12 February 2025		
09:00 - 10:00 Zambia	Plenary Session 10: Strengthening capacity for diagnostics in the ECSA Region and beyond • Statement by the Hon Minister of Health- Uganda Highlights of Uganda's efforts in strengthening diagnostic capacity on the African continent: Achievements and challenges (10 minutes) • Statements from Member States (3 minutes each) • Presentation on ECSA-HC's support to countries to strengthen diagnostic capacity (ECSA-HC Secretariat) • Plenary	
10:00 - 11:00 Zambia	Plenary Session II: Local Manufacturing of Medicines and Medical Supplies: Opportunities and Challenges • Statement by the Hon. Cabinet Secretary of Health- Kenya Building capacity for local manufacturing of pharmaceuticals in Africa: Opportunities and challenges (10 minutes) • Statements from Member States (3 minutes) • Experience of Kenyan based pharmaceutical firm • Plenary	
11:00 - 11:30	TEA BREAK	
11:30- 12:00 Eswatini	Plenary Session 12: Launch of the ECSA-HC 10-year strategic plan Highlights of the 2024-2034 ECSA-HC Strategic Plan (ECSA-HC) Launch of the plan by the Chairperson of the Health Ministers Conference	
12:00-13:00 Eswatini	Plenary session 13: Partners' Roundtable	

HEALTH MINISTERS' CONFERENCE

PRE-CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Pre-conference 1: ECSACONM - Accelerating the development of perioperative skills training (Intuitive Foundation)



Sunday, 9 February 2025



Umodzi Resort Lilongwe, Malawi

This full-day workshop aims to accelerate the development of perioperative skills training modules for nurses and midwives in resource-constrained settings. It builds on progress made during the task deconstruction workshop in Harare, Zimbabwe.

The workshop will take place alongside the 74th Health Ministers' Conference of the East, Central, and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC) at the Umodzi Park Hotel in Lilongwe, Malawi.

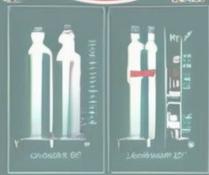
The Malawi workshop will focus on reviewing key perioperative nursing procedures and advancing to the next steps in module development. Specifically, participants will work on building SELF modules, with a focus on simulation, knowledge acquisition, and selfadministered skills assessment.

For more information, please visit: https://www.self.surgery/ecsaconm

HEALTH MINISTERS' CONFERENCE

Pre-conference 2: Transforming High level political commitments on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)









Sunday, 9 February 2025



Umodzi Resort Lilongwe, Malawi

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) poses a critical global health challenge, requiring coordinated and high-level commitment to address its growing threat. Regional and national experts and political leaders actively engaged in AMR initiatives, play a pivotal role in shaping policies, advocating for sustainable solutions and implementing actions within their countries and the region.

This full day pre-conference is proposed to refine and align high-level Global resolutions on AMR to regional and country action and generate a draft action areas for the 2025 ECSA-HC Health Ministers Conference,

This meeting will provide a platform for reflection, consensus-building, and strategic planning to ensure impactful advocacy during the ministerial conference. As the preconference is conducted on the margins of the HMC, it provides a unique opportunity for the AMR Community to advance key resolutions to policy makers.

MAIN CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Plenary session 1: Progress in Building Capacity on Health Emergencies, Response, and Resilience

Session chair: Lesotho

Session overview

The East, Central, and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC) is an intergovernmental organization that plays a pivotal role in uniting member states to strengthen health systems, foster collaboration, and enhance preparedness for emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases. Through its projects and partnerships, ECSA-HC has been at the forefront of capacity-building initiatives focused on early warning systems, cross-border surveillance, laboratory-based disease monitoring, antimicrobial resistance management, and emergency response.

Global preparedness and response strategies have shown significant impact in recent years. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), investments in preparedness can result in a 1:4 cost-benefit ratio during health emergencies. Considering recent outbreaks such as COVID-19, Mpox, Marburg etc and the constant threat posed by other public health emergencies, investing in resilient health systems is more crucial than ever. This session will shed light on the tangible progress made in building the capacity to detect, respond, and recover from health emergencies, while also highlighting the resilience measures that have been integrated across diverse settings. By showcasing evidence-based practices and innovative solutions, the session will underscore the importance of multisectoral engagement, digital technologies, and robust policy frameworks to ensure sustainable impact.

Session objectives

- Reflect on various health emergencies that have affected the region in the recent past and how countries have worked towards strengthening health emergency preparedness, response, and resilience across ECSA-HC member states and the region.
- Demonstrate the added value of e-learning platforms, digital surveillance tools, and other technological advancements that bolster rapid detection, early warning and efficient response.
- Discuss the role of partnerships among governments, international agencies, and local communities in creating interconnected surveillance systems and sharing critical resources and how this can be strengthened.
- Outline evidence-based recommendations and strategic actions for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders to further enhance health emergencies preparedness, response and resilience.

Session topics/presentations

- Regional Overview of Health Emergencies and Pandemic Preparedness ECSA-HC (15 minutes)
- Statements from Member States (3 minutes each)
- Plenary discussion: Interactive Q&A and debate on regional priorities for enhancing resilience against health emergencies

Plenary Session 2: Progress on the Health of Women, Children and Adolescents in the ECSA Region

Session chair: Malawi

Session overview

The health of women, children and adolescents is a top priority among ECSA-HC Member States and the African continent at large. While remarkable progress has been made in reducing preventable maternal and child mortality and ensuring that women, children and adolescents enjoy good health and well-being, a lot remains to be done to achieve the set global targets by 2030.

Session objectives

This plenary session aims to steer reflections on the trends in ECSA region and share select regional success stories among the Member States. More importantly, the session will highlight the critical actions needed to address ongoing challenges to improve health outcomes for women, children and adolescents in the region.

Session topics/presentations:

- Statement by the Hon Minister of Health- United Republic of Tanzania "Highlights of Tanzania's progress in reducing maternal and child mortality and morbidity"
- Adolescents and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health (AYSRH) HMC Resolutions in Action - Progress and Future Directions
- Early Childhood Development
- Safer Births Bundle of Care (SBBC)
- Paediatric surgery in the ECSA region (Kids Operating room)

Moderated plenary discussion

Plenary session 3: Progress in responding to Communicable Diseases in the ECSA region

Session Chair: Malawi

Session overview

Communicable diseases continue to be a major burden on health systems in the Eastern, Central, and Southern Africa (ECSA region). The region remains one of the hardest hit by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, with sub-Saharan Africa accounting for approximately 70% of the global total of HIV-positive individuals. Despite regional efforts, malaria remains endemic in many countries in the region, with large portions of the population at risk of infection, especially in rural and underdeveloped areas. In addition to its health impact, malaria places a significant economic burden on affected countries due to lost productivity and healthcare costs. TB continues to be a major issue, compounded by the rise of multi-drugresistant (MDR-TB) and extensively drug-resistant (XDR-TB) strains. The co-infection of HIV and TB remains a critical public health issue in many ECSA countries. Vaccine-Preventable-Diseases like measles and polio, remain a threat in the region due to gaps in immunization coverage and challenges in reaching underserved populations.

These events have exposed the gaps in infection prevention and control (IPC) programmes that exist, irrespective of the resources available or the national income level. Globally, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and WHO, nearly 3.5 million people can lose their lives due to HAIs every year up to 2050. This corresponds to 4.4 times the number of global deaths in 2021 due to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and sexually transmitted diseases combined. From the global IPC report 2024, Only 6% (9 of 150) of countries met all the WHO minimum requirements and 14% (21 of 150) met 90% at the national level.

In this regard the ECSA region faces significant challenges in combating communicable diseases due to a combination of factors such as deficits in healthcare infrastructure including WASH, poor implementation of infection prevention and control and antimicrobial resistance interventions, limited resources, high poverty levels, and devastating effects of climate change, challenging geographical terrain in some areas. However, the region has made notable progress in addressing these health challenges in

recent years through increased collaboration, improved healthcare systems, and concerted efforts by regional governments, international organizations, and non-governmental entities. The region has made notable progress in addressing these health challenges in recent years through increased collaboration, improved healthcare systems, and concerted efforts by regional governments, international organizations, and non-governmental entities.

Session objectives

This session aims to provide a detailed overview of the progress made in responding to communicable diseases in the ECSA region and by individual Member States, highlighting key achievements, challenges, and areas for improvement.

Session presentations/topics

- Hon Minister of Health- Kingdom of Eswatini to deliver a statement on Progress and Challenges in Achieving the Global Targets for Ending Communicable Diseases: The case of Eswatini (10 minutes)
- AMR Specialist from ECSA-HC to share a Summary of Resolutions from UNGA and Global Ministerial Summit on AMR (Africa CDC/ECSA-HC) (10minutes)
- Plenary discussion: Statements by designated speakers followed by questions and answer session through moderated discussion, participants may share their experiences during the open session.

Plenary Session 4: Towards Universal Health Coverage in Challenging Geographical Contexts

Session Chair: Kenya

Session overview

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) remains a cornerstone of global health priorities, particularly in regions facing challenging geographical contexts. This plenary session will highlight innovative approaches, policy frameworks, and lessons learned in delivering equitable healthcare to hard-to-reach populations. The session provides an opportunity for member states to share their experiences, foster dialogue, and strengthen strategies for achieving UHC despite geographical barriers.

Session objectives

- Showcase best practices and lessons learned from addressing healthcare challenges in remote and underserved regions.
- Promote policy and strategy dialogue among member states to accelerate progress towards UHC.
- Encourage collaboration and innovation in addressing health inequities posed by geographical challenges.
- Provide a platform for member states to voice their perspectives and share solutions for expanding health coverage.

Session presentations

- Opening Statement: Title: Bringing Health Services Closer to the People Lessons from the Kingdom of Lesotho Hon. Minister of Health, Kingdom of Lesotho
- Statements from Member States: Representatives from participating member states will provide brief remarks highlighting their country's efforts, challenges, and successes in achieving UHC in geographically challenging settings.
- Plenary Discussion: Facilitated discussion among participants, focusing on shared challenges and opportunities for collaboration. Participants are encouraged to engage actively, offering insights and practical recommendations.

Plenary Session 5: Combating Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) in the ECSA region

Session Chair: Zimbabwe

Session overview

Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) remain a significant public health challenge in the ECSA region, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable populations. This plenary session will explore strategies, success stories, and collaborative efforts aimed at combating NTDs. Special emphasis will be placed on lessons learned from Malawi's journey towards eliminating trachoma, contributions by member states, and global perspectives on ending NTDs.

This session provides a platform for sharing knowledge, identifying challenges, and fostering partnerships to accelerate progress in eliminating NTDs.

Session objectives

The session aims to:

- Highlight Malawi's success in trachoma elimination as a model for addressing other NTDs in the region.
- Provide an opportunity for member states to share their progress, challenges, and innovative approaches in combating NTDs.
- Present insights from global initiatives, such as Uniting to End NTDs, to align regional efforts with global strategies.

Foster dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders to accelerate NTD elimination in the ECSA region.

Session topics/Presentations

- Statement by the Hon Minister of Health- Malawi Lessons learnt along the path towards disease elimination: The case of trachoma elimination in Malawi
- Statements by Member States
- Presentation by Uniting to End NTDS

Plenary Discussion: Facilitated discussions among participants

Plenary Session 6: Investing in the Health Workforce in the ECSA-HC Region

Session Chair: Zimbabwe

Session Overview

The health workforce is a critical pillar for achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This plenary session will focus on strategies for investing in the health workforce within the ECSA-HC region. It will explore progress made in addressing human resource challenges, implications of health labor market analysis, and advancements in scaling up innovative learning models such as the Collegiate Model of Learning. The session aims to foster dialogue, share best practices, and identify actionable steps to strengthen the health workforce in the region.

Session Objectives

- Highlight progress made by ECSA-HC member states in addressing the human resources for health (HRH) crisis.
- Present findings from health labor market analyses and discuss their implications for implementing the African Charter on Health Workforce Investment.
- Review the progress and challenges associated with scaling up the Collegiate Model of Learning in the region.
- Facilitate dialogue on opportunities for enhanced investment in health workforce development.

Session presentations

- Opening Statement: Progress Made in Addressing the Human Resources for Health Crisis in Zambia- Hon. Minister of Health, Zambia
- Presentation 1: Evidence from the Health Labour Market Analysis Conducted in ECSA-HC Member States: Implications for the African Charter on Health Workforce Investment-WHO-AFRO
- Presentation 2: Progress Report on Scaling up the Collegiate Model of Learning-Challenges and Opportunities: ECSA College of Health Sciences/Prof Samukange
- Plenary Discussion: An interactive session allowing participants to share insights, ask questions, and propose solutions to challenges discussed in the presentations.

Plenary Session 7: High Level Ministerial session on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and Mental Health

Session chair: Mauritius

Session overview

NCDs are diseases that are not caused by infectious agents and cannot be transmitted from person to person. They are the leading global causes of death, causing more deaths than all other causes combined, and they strike hardest at the world's LMICs. The massive global toll of NCD deepens poverty, impedes development, threatens health systems, and is a major cause of disability and health inequality. Globally, the NCD burden will increase by 17% in the next ten years and in the African region by 27%. In African nations, NCDs are projected to exceed communicable diseases as the most common causes of death by 2030.

NCDs killed at least 43 million people in 2021, with 18 million before age 70 and 82% of these premature deaths occured in LMICs. Of all NCD deaths, 73% are in LMICs. CVDs accounted for 19 million deaths, cancers 10 million, chronic respiratory diseases 4 million and diabetes just over 2 million. These four groups of diseases account for 80% of all premature NCD deaths. Tobacco use, physical inactivity, the harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diets and air pollution all increase the risk of dying from an NCD. Detection, screening and treatment of NCDs, as well as palliative care, are key components of the response to NCDs. The ECSA-HC region is witnessing an increasing burden of NCDs, similar to global trends. Efforts to prevent and manage NCDs through improved public health policies, healthier lifestyles, and better healthcare infrastructure are essential to reversing this trend.

Whilst a mental health disorder is characterized by a clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotional regulation, or behavior and there are many different types of mental disorders.

In 2019, 970 million people around the world were living with a mental disorder, with anxiety and depressive disorders the most common. In 2020, the number of people living with anxiety and depressive disorders rose significantly because of the COVID-19 pandemic. While effective prevention and treatment options exist, most people with mental disorders do not have access to effective care.

In Africa, 3% to 16% of the population is estimated to be suffering from mental health disorders, with service provision failing to meet demand and the rates of mental illnesses and depression expected to double. The ECSA-HC region is not spared to mental health challenges, with prevalence varying across countries. Mental health disorders are increasingly recognized as a significant public health issue in the region. However, mental health services are often limited, particularly in rural or underserved areas. The region faces challenges in both human resources and infrastructure needed for the effective delivery of mental health services. Exposure to adverse social, economic, geopolitical, and environmental conditions such as poverty, violence, inequality, and environmental deprivation further increase the risk of mental health conditions

Session objectives

- To provide an overview of the current status, challenges, and trends related to NCDs within the ECSA region. This includes an analysis of the burden of NCDs on public health systems, the socio-economic impact, and the key risk factors contributing to their rise and how as a region we can accelerate the achievement of the 2030 World Health Organization agenda.
- To address the key issues surrounding MH in the region while fostering collaboration and exchange of best practices among the member states through the Health Ministers panel discussion.

Session presentations

- Overview of the NCDs in the ECSA-HC region (ECSA-HC Secretariat) (10 minutes)
- HPV prevention and cervical cancer management (World Bank) (10 minutes)
- Statement by a Youth Advocate on Adolescent Mental Health (Commonwealth Youth Forum) (10 minutes)
- Ministerial Panel discussion on Mental Health (60 minutes) fireplace

Discussants:

- 1. Hon. Minister of Health Eswatini
- 2. Hon. Cabinet Secretary of Health Kenya
- 3. Hon. Minister of Health Malawi
- 4. Hon. Minister of Health Mauritius
- 5. Hon. Minister of Health United Republic of Tanzania

Moderator: Dr. Jones Masiye - Manager NFSN, ECSA-HC

Plenary session 8: Health Financing in the ECSA region - The Africa Leadership Meeting (ALM) commitments to increasing domestic investment in health

Session chair: Tanzania

Session overview

ECSA member states, face health financing challenges that are typically characteristic of most Low- and Middle-Income countries (LMICs). Key among them are inadequate financial resources to meet the increasing healthcare demands of their populations. Countries also face challenges in determining the mechanisms of allocating and utilizing the limited resources in ways that would attain the efficiency and equity goals of the health systems.

In recent years, health financing has increasingly received the attention of the highest political leadership on the African continent. Building on the 2001 Abuja Declaration, Heads of State of the African Union adopted the Declaration titled 'The Addis Ababa Commitments Towards Shared Responsibility and Global Solidarity for Increased Health Financing', otherwise known as the Africa Leadership Meeting (ALM) Declaration. The ALM is a comprehensive initiative that aims to put in place the political and technical mechanisms, to enable countries steadily increase domestic investment in health year after year.

The ECSA region has made progress in the implementation of the ALM Agenda. National Dialogues on Financing have so far been held in 7 out of the 9 member states, involving Ministries of Finance, Parliamentarians, Civil Society, the Private sector and other key stakeholders. The dialogues define roadmaps for improving the financing for health, with particular focus on increasing the share domestic resources.

This session will provide an opportunity to member states to share their experience, lessons and challenges, in the implementation of the ALM Agenda at the national level. Discussions will aim to assist the Conference in identifying good practices to be adopted by the member states, and the support that they need from partners at the country and regional level, including ECSA Secretariat, towards the effective implementation of the ALM Agenda.

Session objectives

- To receive progress updates on the Implementation of Health Financing Strategies
- Share experience on the efforts to increase domestic investments in health and its challenges
- Showcase ECSA Secretariat's support to member states in the implementation of the ALM Agenda

Session topics

- Country experience shared by Mauritius on increasing domestic investments in health
- Brief Statements from member states on implementation progress of health financing strategies
- An overview of ALM Commitments and ECSA Secretariat's support to member states through the Thanzi Health Economics Project.

Plenary Session 9: Progress on Integrating Regional Health Data in the ECSA region

Session chair: Uganda

Session Overview

The ECSA region comprises countries with diverse health challenges and systems. Effective integration of regional health data is crucial for informed decision-making, policy formulation, and resource allocation. It supports the development of regional policies that align with global health standards. Data integration helps identify gaps in healthcare services, allowing for equitable resources distribution. Countries can optimize the use of medical supplies, workforce, and funding based on shared data insights. Collaborative research across countries leads to better medical innovations and evidence-based interventions.

This plenary session will explore data integration initiatives in the region, including an electronic database to address cross-border referral issues and ensure continuity of care for tuberculosis (TB) patients. We also recognize the essential role of artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare, with Qure.ai developing diagnostic solutions that leverage AI for faster, more accurate assessments linked to data systems. Finally, we will discuss frameworks for monitoring the implementation of Health Ministers' Resolutions, ensuring our planning aligns with ministerial directives and measuring progress toward regional and global health commitments.

Session objectives

- Assess the current status of regional health data integration, review the progress made in integrating health data across ECSA Region, identify key milestones achieved and best practices implemented.
- Discuss barriers to data integration, including technical, policy, and infrastructure challenges and explore solutions to harmonize health data collection and reporting mechanisms.
- Strengthen Regional Collaboration and Partnerships, hhighlight the role of regional institutions like the ECSA Health Community, WHO, Africa CDC, and AU in facilitating data integration.
- Demonstrate how integrated health data supports disease surveillance, health planning, and emergency response.
- stablish key priorities and timelines for enhancing regional health data integration.

Session presentations/topics

- Statement by the Hon Minister of Health- Progress towards health digitization: Lessons from operationalizing the Cross-Border Referral System (CBRS) and the TB Dashboard in Zimbabwe (10 minutes)
- Building Future-Ready Health Systems: AI Solutions for Population Health and Resilience Qure.ai (10 minutes)
- Monitoring progress on implementation of HMC resolutions: An example of TB data (10 minutes)
- Moderated plenary discussion: Through presentations and interactive discussions, participants will review the ongoing regional initiative for health data integration, achievements and challenges to data integration and recommend future direction to enhance the data integration in ECSA Region.

Session 10: Strengthening Capacity for Diagnostics in the East, Central, and Southern Africa Region

Session chair: Zambia

Session overview

Accurate and timely diagnostics play a key role in disease surveillance, treatment, and prevention ensuring effective healthcare systems. Most countries in the East, Central, and Southern Africa (ECSA) region are burdened by high rates of communicable and non-communicable diseases and are faced with persistent challenges in diagnostics, including limited laboratory infrastructure, shortages of skilled personnel, inadequate capacity for maintenance and calibration of laboratory equipment, inadequate supply chains, and lack of integration between diagnostic services and national health systems. These challenges are complicated further by various health threats including emerging and re-emerging diseases, Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), zoonotic diseases, and the effects of climate change, which demand robust diagnostic systems to ensure early detection and response.

In response, ECSA-HC through various initiatives and projects like the East African Public Health Laboratory Networking (EAPHLN), Global Fund Regional Laboratory Strengthening TB Project, Southern Africa TB Health System Strengthening (SATBHSS), Strengthening Pandemic Preparedness (SPP) and Health Emergency Preparedness Response and Resilience (HEPRR) has collaborated with member states and partners such as WHO, Africa CDC, ASLM, Uganda Supranational Reference Laboratory building resilient laboratory systems to support regional disease surveillance, preparedness and outbreak response systems as one of its areas of strategic focus. Key initiatives included (i) supporting member states to develop policy documents, strategies and guidelines; (ii) strengthening the implementation of quality management systems through training, peerto-peer laboratory audits using the WHO Stepwise Laboratory Improvement Program Towards Accreditation (SLIPTA), mentorship and ISO accreditation; (iii) enhancing biosafety and biosecurity; (iv) establishing/expand programs for External Quality Assurance; (v) supporting the verification and introduction of new technologies including molecular assays; (vi) and promoting regional harmonization of diagnostic standards. Furthermore, the secretariat advocates for scaling up investments in laboratory infrastructure, adoption of WHO recommended diagnostics and digital health solutions to improve efficiency and accuracy in diagnostics.

Various institutions and Ministries of Health in the ECSA region and beyond have benefited from the above support in Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Comoros, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Somalia, South Sudan, South Africa, Tanzania, Seychelles, Somalia, Rwanda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Session objectives

- Share and highlight efforts, achievements and challenges in strengthening diagnostic capacity on the African continent
- Showcase ECSA-HC's support to countries to strengthen diagnostic capacity in the region
- Make key policy recommendations to ECSA-HC member states' Health Ministers

Session topics

- Main Statement by the Hon Minister of Health- Uganda: Highlights of Uganda's efforts in strengthening diagnostic capacity on the African continent - Achievements and challenges
- Statements from Member States
- Presentation on ECSA-HC's support to countries to strengthen diagnostic capacity -ECSA-HC Secretariat

Plenary session II: Enhancing Local Pharmaceutical and Medical Supplies Manufacturing to Improve Health Security in the ECSA Region

Session chair: Zambia

Session Overview

In the African Region, between 70% and 100% of medicines and other medical products, 99% of vaccines, and between 90% to 100% of medical devices3 are imported, with very limited or no manufacturing capacity for active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), drug substances for vaccines, and medical devices. There are 649 pharmaceutical manufacturing plants in Africa, with 29 countries having varying drug manufacturing capabilities. In comparison, China and India have roughly the same population as the African Region and have 5000 and 10 500 drug manufacturers, respectivelyAgenda 2063, the Africa we Want, Africa's blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future. The Agenda aims to deliver on its goal for inclusive and sustainable development and is a concrete manifestation of the pan-African drive for unity, self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity. The Framework for strengthening local production of medicines, vaccines, and other health technologies in the WHO African region 2025–2035.

The COVID-19 pandemic and global supply chain disruptions highlighted the urgent need for regional self-sufficiency in pharmaceutical and medical supplies manufacturing. Strengthening local production is essential for improving access to essential medicines, reducing dependency on imports, and enhancing health security across the East, Central, and Southern Africa (ECSA) region.

Session 12: Launching the ECSA-HC Strategic plan

Session chair: Eswatini



The East, Central, and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA -HC) at its 50th year of existence also present its Strategic Plan (2024-2034), designed to propel the organization into a new era of enhanced visibility, relevance, and sustainability. Rooted in the principles of innovation, collaboration, and adaptability, this strategic plan represents a bold step forward in our journey towards advancing health outcomes and well-being in the region.

The strategic plan outlines comprehensive strategies to diversify revenue streams, enhance resource mobilization efforts, and optimize financial management practices. By strengthening partnerships, exploring innovative financing mechanisms, and promoting cost-effective approaches, ECSA-HC seeks to ensure the continuity and sustainability of its programs and operations as well as strengthened Value Proposition to Member States and Stakeholders. The strategic objective for the new strategic plan is as follows: -

- Building of Human Resources for Health capacity in Member States and the secretariat
- Strengthen health systems in the ECSA-HC Member States towards attainment of universal health coverage
- Support the development and facilitate the implementation of RMNCAH strategies in the Member States
- Promote the reduction of non-communicable diseases, mental health conditions, injuries and all forms of malnutrition
- Promote the reduction of communicable and infectious diseases and the effects of climate on health
- Strengthen knowledge generation, management and utilization to inform decision making and programming in health
- Foster regional health policy agenda, strategic partnerships and collaboration towards the achievement of international commitments including the Sustainable Development Goals
- Improve financial sustainability for ECSA-HC secretariat
- Strengthen ECSA-HC Secretariat's capacity to provide oversight and implement good corporate governance

This session is aimed to (i) highlight to the stakeholders the strategic vision of ECSA-HC for the next 10 years; (ii) launch the strategic plan by the Ministers to officially mark its journey to implementation.

Session topics

- Overview of the ECSA-HC 2024-2034 strategic plan
- Official launch of the Strategic plan

Session 13: Partners Consultation Forum at the 74th HMC

Session chair: Eswatini

Partnerships have always been a cornerstone of the East, Central, and Southern Africa Health Community's (ECSA-HC) efforts to improve health outcomes across the region. Recognizing the pivotal role of collaboration, ECSA-HC will host a Partners Consultation Forum during the 74th Health Ministers Conference (HMC) to engage stakeholders in supporting the implementation of the Regional Health Agenda and implementation of ECSA-HC Strategic Plan (2024-2034). This plan outlines the region's collective vision for addressing critical health challenges, strengthening health systems, and promoting equitable access to quality healthcare. The forum will provide a platform for partners to identify opportunity for aligning their resources, expertise, and initiatives with the strategic focus of the region and to support the members states ensuring sustainable and impactful health interventions.

Session objectives

- To engage partners in dialogue to identify opportunities for alignment and collaboration.
- To secure commitments from partners to support the implementation of the strategic plan through funding, technical assistance, and capacity-building initiative
- To establish mechanisms for continuous engagement and accountability between ECSA-HC, member states, and partners.

This forum will be a round table with the various stakeholders and partners as panellists in a moderated session. The session will be a significant milestone in galvanizing collective action to strengthen health systems and address priority health issues across the region.

SUMMARY OF KEY TAKEAWAYS & REFLECTIONS FROM THE MEMBER STATES

This session will provide final reflections from the member states and some key messages from the meeting. This will be a fireplace discussion with selected member states.



POST-CONFERENCE SESSIONS

ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE FLEMING FUND FELLOWS POST CONFERENCE SESSION

Session Title: Sustaining Impact: Leveraging Fleming Fund Fellowship Experiences for Strengthened AMR Action

13-14TH February 2025, Umodzi Park Resort, Lilongwe Malawi

Objective

This session will provide Fleming Fund Fellows with a platform to reflect on their fellowship experiences after the HMC, share key learnings, and explore strategies for sustaining AMR capacity-building efforts beyond the fellowship. The session will also facilitate peer-to-peer learning and engagement with policymakers, funders, and AMR stakeholders.

Session Topics

- Reflections, Lessons, and Best Practices
- Panel Discussion: Fellows' Experiences & Lessons Learned
- Thematic Group Discussions: Successes & Challenges
- Capacity-Building Workshop: Leadership & Policy Influence
- Fellows' Knowledge Exchange: Case Studies from Different Regions
- Embedding Fellowship Learnings into National AMR Strategies
- Collaborative Action Planning: Strengthening the Fellows Network

Expected Outcomes

- Strengthened AMR leadership and advocacy skills among fellows.
- Practical strategies for integrating fellowship learnings into national AMR policies.
- Enhanced cross-country collaboration and peer-learning networks.
- Sustainable roadmap for Fleming Fund Fellows' continued engagement in AMR efforts.

HEALTH MINISTERS' CONFERENCE



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been installed in the ECSA region alone by the end of 2025. Supporting over 130,000 life-changing operations every year. Through surgical training, innovative technology, and government advocacy, we're ensuring every child has access to safe surgery. Learn more at www.KidsOR.org





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ECSA-COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES



The East Central and Southern Africa College of Health Sciences (ECSA-CHS) is a coordinating college for the ECSA affiliated professional colleges established by ECSA-HC member states in 2014 under HMC resolution:

There are 11 colleges affiliated to ECSA CHS

Affiliated Colleges





VISION

To be the leader in health in East, Central and Southern Africa, contributing towards the attainment of the highest standard of physical, mental and social well-being of the people in the region.

MISSION

ECSA Health Community recognizes health as a fundamental human right. As an inter-governmental organization, ECSA promotes the highest standards of health for the individuals, families and communities through advocacy, capacity building, brokerage, coordination, inter-sectoral collaboration and harmonization of health policies and programmes.

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