January 29, 2020

Communique to the African Union by Youth Leaders for Health

Presented to:
His Excellency Kwesi Quartey
AUC Deputy Chairperson

The Clock is Ticking.

Africa is home to 93% of world’s malaria cases and 94% of world’s malaria deaths (WHO, 2019). The economic burden of malaria on African countries is estimated to be up to US$12 billion annually and this continues to slow the continent’s growth by more than 1% per year (UNICEF). This context compromises Africa’s progress on agenda 2063, particularly on the aspiration for a prosperous Africa, based on inclusive growth and sustainable development. One of the goals under this aspiration is healthy and well-nourished citizens, which aligns with the United Nations sustainable development goal of ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages. This too is compromised.

Malaria can be prevented, diagnosed and treated. However, the level of investment in malaria control remains inadequate. Many people who could benefit from malaria interventions miss out because of health system inefficiencies. To reach the Global Malaria targets, funding will need to be increased to approximately four times the total current funding levels (Global Malaria Action Plan).

With close to 400 000 people projected to die in Africa this year alone from malaria- a preventable and treatable disease, and a global response that is off track, Africa must move quickly and decisively. Changing the trajectory of this disease will demand high level political leadership in Africa.

We, Youth Leaders for Health¹, gathered in Addis Ababa ahead of the AU Summit, therefore, call upon our leaders to:

1. increase domestic resources for health towards halving malaria by 2023 and strengthening health systems.
2. support youth-led mechanisms that enable universal health coverage.

As youth leaders, we pledge our ongoing support as partners and stakeholders towards ending the malaria epidemic, achieving universal health coverage (UHC) and creating lasting impact. Indeed, better malaria control will yield demographic, social and economic benefits for African countries over the coming decades.

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¹ We are 25 Youth Leaders from Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania, passionate about health and healthcare systems and will advocate for policy change at key national, regional and global advocacy moments.