



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY WILLIAM RUTO,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA, DURING
AN EVENT CO-HOSTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF
KENYA AND THE INTERNATIONAL VACCINE
INSTITUTE ON THE SIDELINES OF 37TH ORDINARY
SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN
UNION IN ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, ON FEBRUARY
18, 2024

“ESTABLISHING A HOLISTIC ECOSYSTEM FOR
SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL VACCINE
MANUFACTURING IN AFRICA

Your Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

1. I am delighted to welcome you to this event, which the government of Kenya is honoured to host alongside the International Vaccine Institute (IVI).

2. I take this earliest opportunity to sincerely thank the Director-General of the International Vaccine Institute, Dr Jerome Kim, and his entire team, for the consistent commitment and support for the implementation of the third strategic pillar of the New Public Health Order, the Africa Union's Framework of Action. This pillar aims to deliver the continent's health security agenda by focusing on expanding the manufacturing of vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the grave vulnerabilities inherent in our global healthcare systems, graphically exposing glaring inequalities in access to life-saving diagnostics, medicines and vaccines. This unacceptable situation has been worsened by arbitrary and unequal distribution supplies, vaccine nationalism and our continent's over-reliance on external sources to mount an effective response to an existential global crisis.

4. I urge you to also recall the m-pox (formerly known as monkey pox) crisis which plagued Africa during the pandemic in 2020, yet received no international attention until cases began to spread beyond the continent. Only then did vaccines become available even though, four years later, not a single dose of the vaccine has reached Africa. This is unacceptable in 2024.

5. The time has come for the African Union Member States to take bold and decisive steps in implementing homegrown solutions to our health security challenges. As regards vaccines, we must build a holistic ecosystem incorporating the entire value chain, all the way from research and development to clinical trials, local production as well as efficient distribution and delivery. Strong political will and commitment is necessary to intensify and sustain investments in healthcare infrastructure, human capital and institutional frameworks.

6. Consequently, Kenya is committed to working in close collaboration with our valued partners, including the African Union Commission, Africa CDC, the African Medicines Agency, the World Health Organisation, IVI and other regional and international stakeholders. As members of the African Union, we must seize this opportunity to

accelerate and create an enabling environment for vaccine manufacturing in our continent by mobilising adequate resources, sharing knowledge, expertise, technology and best practices. I stand before you to confirm that you can count on Kenya to translate this commitment into decisive actions and visible results in the coming months.

Your Excellencies

Esteemed guests

7. Even as we seek to collaborate and forge partnerships to develop our vaccine production capacity, we must not lose sight of our fundamental strategic goal, which is the achievement of vaccine and healthcare sovereignty. Africa must therefore begin to liberate itself from dependence on donor-funded mechanisms, and AU Member States must significantly accelerate efforts to develop a self-reliant, self-sufficient vaccine production sector for sustainable access to routine as well as outbreak vaccinations.

8. In turn, it is necessary for African leaders to mobilise adequate investments in local vaccine industries, which entails the removal of drawbacks, including intellectual property obstacles to manufacturing, trade barriers and supply chain

constraints. We must also promote equitable vaccine distribution globally based on the need to save lives, not greed for profit.

9. Further, local production of vaccines makes it feasible to ensure equity in distribution among Member States, bearing in mind that no one is safe until everyone is safe. It is crucial to ensure that vaccines are available and accessible to all, without exclusion or discrimination, regardless of nationality, wealth or social status.

Distinguished Guests,

10. I am encouraged by our manifest resolve, as African leaders, to seize this moment, reimagine and transform the future of healthcare in Africa by building a resilient, equitable and sustainable manufacturing ecosystem that serves the vaccine needs of our continent and its people.
11. Let us work hard together so that posterity remembers our generation for the boldness of our vision, firmness of our conviction, results of our actions and impact of our achievements. Together, we have a chance to ensure that Africa is prepared to face the complex challenges of today and a healthy and prosperous future for generations to come.

12. Our commitment to achieve self-sufficiency by establishing a holistic continental ecosystem of vaccine production capacity is anchored by the target we have set for ourselves: That by 2040, 60% of vaccines used in Africa shall be locally manufactured. We have less than two decades to go, which leaves us with no choice but to accelerate what must be done. Today, therefore we are here to shift gears and go **farther, faster, together**, to make health security a public good in Africa.

Thank you.

God bless you

God bless Africa