

# Chapter 2: Health and Pandemic Preparedness

This chapter deals with commitment 1 in the Final Declaration of the 6<sup>th</sup> Summit: access to vaccines, African health sovereignty, and comprehensive WTO response to the pandemic, including an investment package for pandemic preparedness, health security and access to essential health services.

# KEY OBSERVATIONS

## Context:

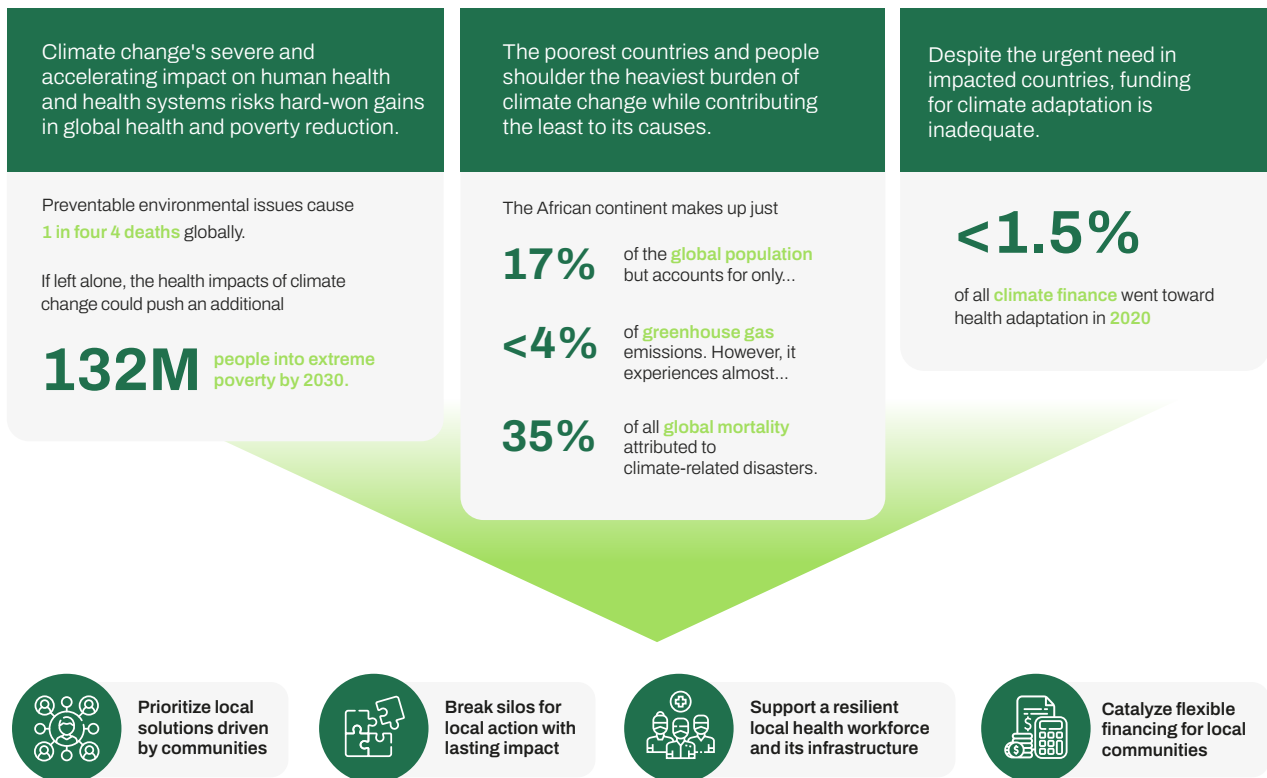
- **There is significant evidence of the severe damage the pandemic has caused to health gains achieved over the last decades** in Africa and its impact on European health systems; for instance, a 37% overall reduction in visits and admissions in Europe and a 70% decline in patient flow in sub-Saharan Africa during the pandemic, with long-term effect on medical units and preventive services across the population. The resurgence of preventable infectious diseases such as measles in Africa and Europe, and the backlog in non-emergency health care in Europe demonstrate the importance of investing in emergency preparedness and building resilient health systems on both continents.
- **There is increased global focus on the impact of climate change on health systems.** The convening of the first health day at COP28 in December 2023 demonstrates the importance of collaborative and integrated approaches to addressing the profound impact of climate change on human health and the severity of diseases, as well as the capacity of health systems to react.
- **The COP28 Health Declaration, endorsed by more than 120 countries, is a first step in ensuring that health remains on the global agenda** as a critical consideration in climate financing and adaptation.

## Potential areas of action:

- **Accelerated implementation of initiatives to support the demand side for locally manufactured vaccines and medical products remains key to ensure success and sustainability of these investments.** This should include ensuring the guidelines, costs and capacity-building required for purchase at scale of supplies. A similar effort should be made to ensure operationalisation of the investments, particularly by continued training of the local health workforce and ensuring efficiency in regulatory processes for supply chain integration that meets demand. In this way, capacity for local manufacturing and distribution of medical products can be increased. Governance of the system, ensuring the requested level of quality control, is also key.
- **To build resilient and sustainable health systems on both continents that can help prevent and respond to future pandemics, it remains critical to sustain political focus.** The current de-prioritisation of Health on political agendas underlines the importance of framing health commitments beyond the COVID-19 pandemic response, but also as part of a broader agenda to build sustainable and resilient health systems. It requires strong political leadership that will place health high on the global political agenda.
- **Significant investment in manufacturing of vaccines is bearing fruit** with local manufacturing facilities already creating new jobs, and new investments starting in medical products. These funds, together with sharing knowledge and expertise, also help towards achieving the AU's goal of ensuring 60% of Africa's routine vaccines are produced on the continent by 2040 (*Partnership for Manufacturing and Access to Vaccines, Medicines and Health Technologies in Africa* and MAV+ flagship).

- **Cross-silo approaches are critical to broaden health agendas with a focus on climate-health.** Achieving desired health outcomes that are sustainable requires moving away from traditional, sectoral action and instead centrally incorporating health into the climate agenda.

Graphic 2: Climate-health nexus: Climate change effects on health and health systems



- **To combat present and future climate-health related shocks, a cohort of skilled health workers to meet growing demands will be necessary.** They will need to be equipped and fully resourced with climate-resilient health systems, technology, and know-how. With a resilient local health force and associated infrastructure, Africa and Europe will be ready to respond effectively to climate-induced health emergencies while ensuring sustainable health outcomes.
- **As part of the COP28 Health Declaration, countries have committed to follow up meetings with diverse line-ministers and stakeholders to define specific actions at the nexus of climate and health.** Countries and other stakeholders that have signed the Declaration need to be held accountable for actioning these next steps, including the disbursement of the USD 2.7 billion in funding commitments to health initiatives (though questions remain on how much is new financing). The full realization of the non-binding Health Declaration will depend on defining clear indicators for progress and adequate financing, as well as a commitment to advancing the transition away from fossil fuels as noted in the final COP28 negotiated text.
- **A need for stronger collaboration remains to prevent future pandemics in the context of global policy frameworks.** These include the WTO agreement on a comprehensive response to COVID-19, and also the IPR waiver for COVID-19 diagnostics and

therapeutics. Africa-Europe alignment to advance negotiations of the WHO Pandemic Accord are critical for the global health response. There is also potential to explore investment in a Pandemic Fund.

- Building on the strong leadership role played by the Africa CDC during the COVID-19 pandemic, **there is now a need for advanced integration of existing health structures and strategies on the African continent.** The political will of African Member States to create the enabling environment for implementation, including reliable quality control systems, is needed to deliver on the agreed commitments. Structured dialogues between these stakeholders, such as through the high-level steering committee on the cross-continental health partnership, are necessary. The group met in June 2023 to discuss health manufacturing, workforce, data and digital systems. They are set to meet again in March

2024 in Brussels. EU support for AU initiatives such as the AU Digital Health Strategy and the Africa CDC Digital Transformation Strategy likewise provide welcome assistance.

- **Investing in clean cooking solutions is an example of a high impact initiative cutting across sectors, at the nexus of climate-health.** To date, the level of political commitment and investment in clean cooking has not matched the global magnitude of the challenge: nearly 1 billion people still lack access to modern cooking solutions in Sub-Saharan Africa, and almost 500 thousand people in Africa- mainly women and children- die prematurely due to household air pollution every year. Building on the momentum created at the 1<sup>st</sup> Africa Climate Summit, there is an opportunity for Europe and Africa to work together, creating and resourcing governmental clean cooking ‘delivery units’ with Kenya and Sierra Leone as champions.

## HEALTH

The Ten Commitments Framework	Main Commitments
<p><b>COMMITMENT 1: Access to vaccines, African health sovereignty, and comprehensive WTO response to the pandemic</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. <b>Ensuring fair and equitable access to vaccines</b> by supporting local and regional mechanisms for procurement, as well as allocation and deployment of medical products; providing at least 450 million of vaccine doses to Africa, in coordination with the Africa Vaccine Acquisition Task Team (AVATT) platform by mid-2022; and mobilising EUR 425 million to ramp up the pace of vaccination, support the efficient distribution of doses and training of medical teams and the capacity of analysis and sequencing.</li> <li>II. <b>Supporting fully-fledged African health sovereignty</b> (...) by supporting a common agenda for manufacturing vaccines, medicines, diagnostics, therapeutics, and health products in Africa, including investment in production capacities, voluntary technology transfers as well as strengthening of the regulatory framework.</li> <li>III. <b>Engaging towards an agreement on a comprehensive WTO response to the pandemic</b> (including trade &amp; IPR).</li> <li>IV. <b>Support initiatives for pandemic preparedness, health security and equitable access to quality essential health services</b></li> </ol>

## I. Ensuring fair and equitable access to (COVID) vaccines

### Context:

- Despite the availability of vaccine doses, limited funding to address health system and structural barriers contributed to low and slow COVID vaccine coverage in Africa, reaching 51.8% compared to 73.0% in Europe as of September 2023.
- Vaccine delivery was beset by a lack of transparency provided by suppliers to the COVAX mechanism on delivery schedules which compromised country planning for deployment. In addition, short shelf lives of some donated vaccines left insufficient time to deliver the vaccine within African countries.

### Examples of progress to date:

- The delivery of a promised 450 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine reached 206,5 million (46%) by October 2022. Thereafter, the funds to purchase an additional 200 million doses were redirected to strengthening health systems and workforce training to support effective vaccine deployment.

- By October 2022 at least 375 million Euro from a promised 425 million was mobilised to ramp up the pace of vaccination, support the efficient distribution of doses and training of medical teams and the capacity for analysis and sequencing. This included the EUR 200 million redirected from the purchase of vaccine doses. The action has focused on selected countries with the most under-vaccinated populations through COVAX's COVID-19 Delivery Support (CDS) programme, hosted by GAVI.

### Potential areas of action:

- The end of the COVID-19 pandemic led to a diminished focus on health, and thus the commitments made at the peak of the pandemic. Reframing these commitments towards investing in health systems will help ensure that both Africa and Europe are prepared to effectively respond to any future pandemic, that most likely will be linked to the climate crisis. Thus, pandemic preparedness and response should remain high on the political agenda with a focus on building long term resilient health systems.

## II. Supporting fully-fledged African health sovereignty

### Examples of progress to date:

- *'Manufacturing and Access to Vaccines, medicines and health technologies in Africa (TEI MAV+)*' - under implementation - was launched in May 2021 as a response to African leaders' call for health sovereignty aiming to boost local manufacturing capacities in Africa and strengthen pharmaceutical systems. It offers a 360-degree approach encompassing: 1) industrial development, supply chains and private sector, 2) market shaping, demand and trade facilitation, 3) regulatory strengthening, 4) technology transfer and intellectual property

management, 5) access to finance, 6) R&D, higher education and skills. MAV+ has so far mobilised over EUR 1.3 billion, involving 89 projects and 23 implementing partners. Tangible actions and results so far:

- By December 2023, Team Europe had mobilised EUR 1.3 billion investment, combining grants and loans.
- At regional level: there was the consolidation of the Partnership for African Vaccine Manufacturing (PAVM) hosted by the Africa

Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (AfCDC); regulatory strengthening of the African Medicines Agency (AMA) in partnership with the European Medicines Agency, WHO and NEPAD, and the establishment of World Health Organisation's mRNA technology transfer programme and hub in South Africa.

- At country level, investments taking place in Senegal, Rwanda, South Africa, Ghana, and Nigeria to set up and increase production capacity of vaccines and medical products, as well as technology development.
- In June 2022, the EU-Africa pharma and healthcare marketplace and matchmaking event brought together over 200 representatives of companies, and research organisations.
  - » In March 2023, the *Zambia-EU Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Forum* gathered over 600 participants from Europe, Zambia and the region to build business relationships;
  - » In April 2023, launch of MSc and PhD programmes in Biotechnology in partnership with the University of Rwanda.
  - » In October 2023, at the margins of the Global Gateway Forum, a further EUR 134 million was signed to increase local manufacturing and equitable access to quality, safe, effective and affordable health products (i.e. vaccines, medicines and health technologies) in six African countries: Egypt (EUR 3 million), Ghana (EUR 32 million), Nigeria (EUR 18 million), Rwanda (EUR 40 million), Senegal (EUR 25 million), and South Africa (EUR 16 million).

*“For the Global Gateway investment strategy on the development of pharmaceutical manufacturing hubs in Africa to be successful, it should be associated with a health workforce development strategy for pharmaceutical workers and regulatory specialists.”*

*Conclusions of the meeting AEF Strategy Group on Health on the State-of-Africa relations, October 2022*

### **Potential areas of action:**

- To meet its goal of reaching 60% domestic production of vaccines needed on the continent by 2040 - and to ensure long-term sustainability of those investments - accelerated efforts are needed to implement initiatives for locally manufactured products. It is necessary to continue expanding the scope to include local manufacturing of diagnostics and therapeutics. This can assist in ensuring long-term demand.
- Prioritisation of the actions that will fully operationalise the investments in locally manufactured vaccines may significantly contribute to achieving the AU's goal ahead of schedule. Not only can that demonstrate the effectiveness of the Africa-EU partnership but can also significantly contribute to building resilience of African and global health systems in the context of (future) pandemic preparedness.

### Box 6: Increasing medical manufacturing capacity in Africa

Initiatives to establish and increase Africa's capacity to locally manufacture medical products have been accelerated through the leadership of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (AfCDC) and through funding and partnership agreements with the EU and its Member States. A shared commitment to equitable partnership between AU and EU Member States has further contributed to the acceleration of bi-lateral agreements to develop an ecosystem of public and private actors to establish sustainable local capacity for medical product manufacturing in Africa.

Since 2022, The EU has made significant investments in the African Medicines Agency (AMA), the WHO's mRNA technology transfer hub, and the Partnership for African Vaccine Manufacturing (PAVM) in response to the AU's goal of meeting 60% of continental demand with locally manufactured vaccines by 2040. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been approximately 30 investment initiatives for vaccines manufacturing in Africa characterised by bi-lateral partnerships between the AU and its Member States, Europe, and other stakeholders. Most recently, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH supported a global event in June 2023 bringing together Team Europe, African pharmaceutical firms, investors and funders, development partners, and regional facilitators to discuss how to develop sustainable investment in vaccine manufacturing. In September 2023, the AfCDC and the French government signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen efforts to improve public health systems and health security in Africa.

The EU has made strategic investments in different parts of the vaccine production pipeline to increase local manufacturing capacity in Africa. This includes a EUR 11.26 million investment through the European Investment Bank for Emzor Pharmaceutical Industries to establish the first manufacturing plant of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) in Nigeria for the production of antimalarial drugs in July 2022; a grant facility of up to EUR 5million into DEK Pharmaceuticals to support the construction, furnishing and validation of a fill and finish vaccine manufacturing facility in Ghana in March 2023; and an investment of more than EUR 140 million into Aspen Pharmacare Holdings Limited in South Africa in 2021 enabling the production of more than 225 million doses of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine at their manufacturing site. These investments complement others in Senegal to expand the workforce and in Rwanda to build a new facility to unlock local manufacturing capacity for vaccines.

However, some challenges remain, which require action by different actors and progress across different sectors including data collection and transparency from private operations. There has been limited investment in increasing local manufacturing capacity in Africa for other medical products, including diagnostics and therapeutics. A lack of information by private actors is evident on the progress of vaccine manufacturing initiatives and investments, including quantifying their impact on advancing the AU's goal of meeting 60% of continental demand with locally manufactured vaccines by 2040. The COVID-19 pandemic was an accelerant for increased investment in vaccine manufacturing capacity in Africa, but as the pandemic has receded, there is need for more clarity on how the established manufacturing capacity will meet local and evolving vaccination needs. Finally, more attention needs to be given to the market conditions for locally manufactured products, including the role of African governments, to ensure long-term demand for locally produced products.

### Box 7: EU-Rwanda Partnership on Building Pharma/Medical Manufacturing Capacity

Over the last year, the focus of the EU-Rwanda partnership has been on (1) building vaccine manufacturing and (2) supporting the Rwanda FDA in regulatory strengthening.

Regarding vaccine manufacturing, the groundbreaking of the BioNTech vaccines plant took place in Rwanda in June 2022, following the signing of the Twinning agreement between the EU and Rwanda Food and Drugs Authority (RFDA) to support the enabling environment for regulation of medicinal products and vaccines in Rwanda. A consortium led by France, Germany and Belgium is supporting Rwanda to build regulatory capacity expertise.

The facility, which will be initially equipped with two BioNTainers, is the first mRNA vaccine production facility in an African network to provide sustainable production capacity for mRNA pharmaceuticals. Further manufacturing facilities in Africa including Senegal and South Africa are planned to follow.

Recently, Rwanda welcomed six mobile vaccine-production units developed by German pharmaceutical company BioNTech. Once assembled, they will become a vaccine production hub for jabs against a variety of illnesses, capable of producing up to 100 million mRNA vaccines per year. The containers, dubbed BioNTainers, will also pioneer treatments in the development phase against diseases like malaria, tuberculosis and HIV that are among the leading killers in Africa. Rwanda is expected to distribute the vaccines to the 55-member African Union bloc.

In December 2023, President Paul Kagame and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen inaugurated the first BioNTech Africa manufacturing site in Kigali. The occasion also marked an additional EUR 40 million Global Gateway investment to strengthen the Rwandan ecosystem for manufacturing health products. This includes investments in building skills through higher education, and vocational training, and fostering local R&D and biotech startups. With this new contribution, total Team Europe support to local manufacturing and access to medical tools and technologies in Rwanda comes to EUR 93.7 million.



### III. Engaging towards an agreement on a comprehensive WTO response to the pandemic (including trade & IPR)

#### Examples of progress to date:

- In June 2022, an agreement was reached at the WTO on a global IPR waiver for COVID vaccinations for a duration of 5 years (excluding waiver for COVID diagnostics and therapeutics). In September 2023, WTO's TRIPS Council met to consider a potential extension of the waiver for diagnostics and therapeutics.
- Continuous engagement in Geneva in the negotiations on a WHO international agreement on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response to be adopted in May 2024

#### Potential areas of action:

- There is still an opportunity for the EU, Africa, and the global community to agree on a comprehensive WTO response to the pandemic which would include a comprehensive *TRIPS waiver* that was originally proposed by South Africa and India, and which received overwhelming support from civil society and over 100 governments.
- Stronger collaboration is needed between leaders of Africa and Europe and its institutions to agree and implement a new global policy framework. This can lead to a better response to future pandemics, such as the WTO agreement on comprehensive response to Covid-19 (including IPR waiver for COVID diagnostics and therapeutics) as well as a common position in the currently negotiated Pandemic Accord which is critical for global health response. A closer collaboration and a single voice in the global dialogue on health could strengthen the health partnership and contribute to securing desirable outcomes for Africa and Europe at the upcoming political milestones.

“Europe can be a key global partner in strengthening health resilience by listening to the leadership in Africa’s COVID response. A first step would be proactively supporting voluntary technology transfer and a broad IP waiver at WTO negotiations.”

*Agnes Binagwaho, Co-Chair of the AEF Strategy Group on Health*

## IV. Support initiatives for pandemic preparedness, health security and equitable access to quality essential health services

### Examples of progress to date:

- **‘Digital Health for Health Systems Strengthening and Universal Health Coverage (UHC)’**, - in inception, launched at 2022 African Health Tech Summit and 2<sup>nd</sup> CPHIA in Kigali, December 2022. Aims to accelerate the strengthening of health systems and achieve universal health coverage through digital health initiatives. Team Europe contribution of EUR 100 million.
  - Contributing projects: TRVST (a digital Traceability and Verification system for medical products) led by UNICEF; panel and roundtable at the African Health Tech Summit which took place in Kigali in December 2022.
- **‘Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in Sub-Saharan Africa’** – in inception, launched at 2<sup>nd</sup> CPHIA in Kigali, December 2022. Aims to advance the SRHR agenda in the SSA region, with a particular focus on adolescent girls and young women, and include actions on increasing the availability, affordability and quality of SRHR commodities. Estimated budget of EUR 60 million.
- **‘Sustainable Health Security using a One Health approach’** – under preparation, expected to be launched by the end of 2023. Aims to achieve higher efficiency by coordinating programmes and promoting synergies with already ongoing initiatives. Indicative funding of EUR 391 million.
- **‘Support to Public Health Institutes (PHI) in Sub-Saharan Africa’** – in preparation. Aims to support public health institutes and public health policies to deliver their core functions, including health research, workforce, and prevention/promotion. The general objective of this TEI is to contribute to community health and wellbeing through the provision of public health services via public health schools and institutes. For example, by supporting the core-functions of the institutions, enhancing

regional collaboration to jointly develop research, training and advocacy programmes, and by integrating African PHIs with European ones into international public health networks. The initiative will foster coordinated and collective action to address priority public health challenges, driving progress in key health indicators and towards universal health coverage.

### Local and regional initiatives led by local partners:

- Burundi: with EU support, improved financial and technical management of health centres by introducing a performance-based approach; continued free health care for pregnant women and children under five years of age, leading to a significant reduction in the under-five mortality rate.
- Sudan: March 2023 a EUR 40 million EU support scheme aiming to improve the health conditions of vulnerable populations affected by extreme poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition including IDPs, refugees and Host Communities.
- Nigeria: December 2022 EIB signed a 14 million loan with Emzor for production of active pharmaceutical ingredients (antimalarials).
- Global: October 2023, the EC, the EIB and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced a new financing partnership of EUR 1.1 billion to eradicate polio and improve access to healthcare services for the most vulnerable populations. This comprised an EUR 500 million contribution to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative – specifically the World Health Organization and UNICEF – as well as EUR 500 million to expand the innovation capacity of health systems in low- and middle-income countries.

- In October 2023, on the margins of the Global Gateway Forum, the EU signed additional EUR 500 million bringing the total partnership amount to EUR 1.6 billion. The EC will guarantee EUR 500 million in loans by the EIB, focusing on commercially viable private sector initiatives by micro, small and medium-sized enterprises to strengthen health systems, primary health care R&D, skills, and the production and marketing of vaccines, medicines and medical technology.
- In February 2024, the EU pledged EUR 6 million for enhancing disease surveillance and laboratory capacity for the Africa Centre for Disease Control (ACDC) as part of the overall agenda to strengthen global systems for disease control, in line with EU's Global Health Strategy and AU Agenda 2063 for strengthening local systems.

### **Potential areas of action:**

- The 2<sup>nd</sup> Joint Africa-EU Ministerial Meeting in October 2021 has rejected the use of the term “Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)”, instead recommending the use of “Reproductive Health and Rights (RHR)”.
- Addressing the impacts of climate change on health systems – through the spread of climate-linked disease, migration, and strain on food systems - will require a global and regional response. This should adopt a cross-sectoral approach that can effectively leverage local communities.
- Integration of existing health structures and strategies in Africa, and globally, is critical for the delivery of agreed commitments. It will also require the commitment and political will of African member states to create the enabling environment for implementation, including reliable quality control systems.
- The existence of resilient local health workforce and infrastructures is key. To combat present and future shocks, additional skilled health workers are needed to meet growing demands. They must be equipped and fully resourced with climate-resilient health systems, technology, and know-how. Only with capable, qualified health workers, including community health workers, can an effective response be mounted, and sustainable health outcomes ensured.

- The increasingly interactive nature of the current global challenges makes it imperative to break silos and examine issues of the health-climate-energy-agriculture-migration nexus. Climate change's pervasive impact requires transcending traditional sector-specific interventions and embracing a comprehensive approach that recognises the relationships between sectors. Global, multisectoral agreements should increase accountability of high emitters, shift ownership to local levels, and promote all-encompassing policies that will catalyse and sustain action. For example, the employment of clean cooking solutions requires working across health-climate-energy sectors.

### **Additional comments:**

- Investments support both AU initiatives such as the AU digital health strategy and the Africa CDC digital transformation strategy, as well as improved coordination and synergies between the numerous programmes already in existence.
- The new *EU Global Health Strategy* launched in November 2022 is complementary to the commitments included in the 6<sup>th</sup> EU-AU Summit. However, initially this new strategy caused concern of diverting both attention and funding away from Summit commitments.

### Box 8: EU Global Health Strategy

There is strong alignment between the EU Global Health Strategy, the Global Gateway Investment Package, and the health commitments made at the 6<sup>th</sup> EU-AU Summit. The EU-AU Summit commitments on health focus on mobilising resources towards COVID-19 vaccine delivery and deployment, developing local manufacturing infrastructure for health products, and strengthening pandemic preparedness and health security. The EU Global Health Strategy focuses on ensuring better health for all in a changing world by focusing on the basics and supporting a new approach to global cooperation and partnerships. Enabling equitable access to quality primary healthcare, increasing domestic health financing, developing an adequate and balanced health workforce, addressing non-communicable diseases, and strengthening health research are shared priorities further outlined at the Summit and reinforced in the EU Global Health Strategy. Through the Global Gateway Investment Package, Europe has committed significant funding for emergency preparedness and response, building African domestic capacity to manufacture medical products, and continuing to combat communicable diseases such as AIDS, malaria, and hepatitis. Together, the EU Global Health Strategy and the Global Gateway Investment Package reinforce the majority of commitments made at the 6<sup>th</sup> EU-AU Summit.

### Box 9: Clean Cooking Solutions at the nexus of Health, Climate, and Development

**Access to clean cooking solutions is a health imperative.** Ambitious commitments and concrete actions to achieve universal access to clean cooking are still lacking, despite presenting powerful levers to achieving human and ecosystem health, climate, gender and development goals.

To date, **the level of political commitment and investment in clean cooking has not matched the global magnitude of the challenge.** In fact, in Africa alone, this presents a \$4 billion annual financing gap.

As 2030 approaches, **the world remains far off track in its SDGs, including number 7 which commits to ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.**

Nearly 1 billion people still lack access to modern cooking solutions in Sub-Saharan Africa, and almost **500,000 Africans die prematurely due to household air pollution every year.** Considering the annual toll on human health, forests, climate and local economies, clean cooking solutions should be central to national climate, health and development strategies.

Bold action must be taken by continental institutions and national political leaders to ensure **the 900 million Africans that currently lack clean cooking solutions** have the means to prepare food in a healthy, clean and affordable way, as well as to contribute to ecosystem recovery, regenerative livelihoods, cleaner air, and female empowerment.

At the 1<sup>st</sup> Africa Climate Summit in September 2023 in Nairobi, both Kenya and Sierra Leone announced the establishment of national clean cooking delivery units at presidential level, paving the way for other African countries to follow. These **'delivery units' would help shape funding and action where commitments exist, and promote the adoption of effective and robust policy frameworks.**

The Summit also saw the launch of the Global eCooking Coalition (GeCCo), a joint initiative by the Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet (GEAPP), Modern Energy Cooking Services (MECS), Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL) and Energising Development (EnDev), to advance the transition to electric cooking, underpinned by renewable energy sources.

At COP28, the African Union Development Bank (AfDB), International Energy Agency and Clean Cooking Alliance formed a new *African Clean Cooking Consortium* to drive forward country-level planning and programmes, catalyse investments and establish Delivery Units in an effort to achieve universal access to clean cooking on the continent within the next 10 years.

Furthermore, the AfDB committed to allocate up to 20% of its annual energy lending to clean cooking solutions, approximately \$2 billion over the next decade, and the United Republic of Tanzania launched the *African Women Clean Cooking Support Programme*.

**Europe and Africa should leverage progress made at the Africa Climate Summit in Nairobi and COP28 in Dubai to elevate the clean cooking agenda at both institutional and country levels, particularly given the concentrated efforts to better efficiency by bridging sector and finance silos. Thus the follow-up meetings to the COP28 Declaration on Health of diverse line-ministers may prove to be an interesting opportunity to drive the clean cooking agenda at ministerial level.**

## In Focus: Update from the AEF Strategy Group on Health

The AEF's Health Strategy Group convenes experts and leading voices from both Africa and Europe to identify gaps and opportunities in health policy and policy implementation that can be addressed through a stronger Africa- Europe partnership.

Cooperation between the African Union and the European Union in the face of pandemics remains crucial. However, there are differences in position between many African countries and within the European Union and other European countries on critical issues such as the pandemic accord (WHO CA+) and language used in reference to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Continuous political transitions also present a challenge to sustained focus on critical global health issues that can be addressed by an Africa – Europe partnership. The AEF and its Health Strategy Group can bring continuity between administrations by providing member states and ministers with a 'state of play' on health issues in the multilateral context, including previously agreed positions and commitments.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Summit commitments made two years ago and AEF's focus areas are still relevant, and provide a roadmap to address both the immediate challenges of pandemic and broader, long term health infrastructure needs. The geopolitical landscape continues to influence distribution and access to medical resources despite progress in building African self-reliance, domestic production capabilities, and regional collaboration. International cooperation and information sharing is a crucial role in addressing global health challenges, particularly between Africa and Europe, on which issues to elevate.

There is significant opportunity to integrate health into broader initiatives such as digital and climate. The Health Strategy Group underlined the timeliness of integration of digital solutions and technology into health systems including the importance of inserting health in the EU-Africa Digital Economy Task Force's work. Digital health, particularly in a pandemic and green transition context, has transformative potential and could be one of the pillars of resilient global and local health systems. Further, gender and equity considerations in health, including ensuring equitable access to resources and support and in framing health policies and decisions, should be a basic component of integrated health initiatives.

### ***Future health workforce observatory***

Linked to progress towards SDG 3 and Universal Health Care by 2030, AEF Health Strategy Group has launched an initiative to establish a Health Workforce Observatory. This is intended to identify the competences and skills necessary for modern, data driven health care services. It will map the curricula and training pathways needed to ensure a strong pipeline of trained professionals, while also contributing to the reduction in brain drain.

The digital transition in healthcare will revolutionise the sector – creating bridges between the technology and health sectors is critical. A mapping of the necessary skills required for modern, digital and integrated health systems in both Africa and Europe for 2030 should be undertaken. Pathways to develop these skills need to be designed. This can help ensure continuous updating and upskilling for those in the health workforce, who do not come from a traditional biomedical education background.