The State of Healthcare in Kenya in a pandemic, National Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya, on the 17th September 2021

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

Amnesty International Kenya, the Kenya Medical Practitioners, Pharmacists and Dentists Union and the People’s Health Movement hosted the National Health Conference organized in a semi-virtual engagement manner.

1. The National Health Conference brought together various stakeholders from the national and county governments, health professionals, human rights defenders, and community health volunteers to identify and address the gaps in our healthcare system as revealed by the COVID 19 pandemic. In the conference, speakers addressed challenges related to the four main principles of the right to health: Accessibility, Affordability, Availability and Acceptable Quality. Additionally, it was imperative to zoom in and deliberate on the long-standing challenges healthcare workers face in Kenya historically.

2. A total of 115 participants were present at the conference consisting of the Chief Administrative Secretary, Ministry of health, the Principal Secretary to the National Treasury, the Governor of Kisumu County representing the Council of Governors, health practitioner’s civil society organizations and members of the public including persons with disability. The conference received plans from the national government, county governments, specialists on various aspects of health and consumers of the healthcare system.

3. Based on extensive and highly interactive deliberations guided by moderators and thematic experts for each panel, the following policy actions emerged from the national conversation:

**On resourcing the health function:**

I. The conference calls on the national government, through the treasury, to take steps to ensure that at least 15% of the national budget is allocated to health in line with the Abuja Declaration to allow counties to allocate at least 50% of the county budgets to health.

II. We call on the national and county governments to ensure that we resource all public healthcare facilities in line with the approved staffing norms and standards for health facilities in Kenya. It is unacceptable that only 10% of the population has access to medical attention from professional medical doctors.

III. We call on the government to rethink the current insurance-based model of Universal Healthcare through NHIF, which will only promote inequality and embrace a tax-based model that ensures healthcare is available for every Kenyan regardless of their social and economic status.

IV. We also demand that the government set up a rigorous system of identifying the poor and vulnerable to cover the huge populations in the informal sector and poor communities for whom it is difficult to collect premiums.

V. We demand that the government lays down a robust monitoring and evaluation mechanism to track, learn and improve the delivery of UHC and Anchor UHC to a strong and enabling national policy framework.
VI. The government has so far received a total of 5,356,580 COVID 19 vaccines. So far, only 3.1% of the total population has been fully vaccinated. As we draw close to the general elections, the risk of further infection increases. We call on the government to urgently introduce a supplementary budget of 10 billion to purchase and distribute the COVID 19 vaccine to the entire adult population by January 2022 and ensure that the cost of treating COVID 19 is free in government hospitals.

VII. Noting the need and importance of being for self-reliance for enhanced access to health, we call on the government to urgently implement measures to ensure the manufacture and production of medical supplies and equipment in Kenya, including medicine and vaccines.

On the mass rollout COVID 19 vaccine as a necessary ingredient for holistic recovery from COVID 19

I. Aware of the global challenges of accessing vaccines as created by developed countries and big pharma, we call on the government of Kenya, through the ministry of foreign affairs, to push for the TRIPS waiver to allow for technology and intellectual transfer to Kenya and other countries in the global south.

II. We call on the government to urgently fund local research companies and pharmaceutical companies to manufacture the COVID 19 vaccine and other vaccines necessary for disease prevention.

III. We call on the religious leaders, private sector, the media, and civil society organizations to urgently implement plans to allow optimal uptake of the COVID 19 vaccine.

IV. We call on the government to share a plan for equitable distribution of vaccines to address the urban-centered vaccine distribution.

On inequity and inclusion

We recognize that all persons with the disability have the legal capacity to make and take decisions within the healthcare system in actualizing the highest attainable standards of health.

We call on the government to provide reasonable inclusion of persons with disabilities in all healthcare facilities and ensure integration of persons with disabilities is properly and fully implemented.

Health policy development and decision making

As we move to the electioneering season, KMPDU, PHM and Amnesty today announce the Afya Nation Movement’s launch, a 200-day active engagement ending on Tuesday 5th April 2022, to prepare and popularize a people’s health manifesto that prioritizes the highest attainable standards of health care. The people’s health movement dubbed Afya Nation Movement will conscientize citizens as they elect leaders in the 2022 elections.

It was done in Nairobi, Kenya, on 17th September 2021.