

PRESS RELEASE

First India–Africa Health Sciences Meet concludes, building blocks for collaborative initiatives to further India-Africa relations

- *Both countries to advance in joint medical research, medical education and pharmaceutical trade*
- *Efforts are to ensure accessible and affordable health services for all*
- *More scholarships, exchange programmes and collaborative research projects to facilitate and expedite research work for improved understanding of common diseases*
- *The meet recommends harmonization of regulatory frameworks to advance development of pharma market in Africa nations*

New Delhi, September 3, 2016: The first edition of the three-day India-Africa Health Sciences Meet under the theme of “A Smart and Caring India for a Healthy Africa” culminated today at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, with high-level representatives from India and over 20 African nations, agreeing to take concrete steps to boost health and research collaborations between the two regions. In light of the similar health challenges faced by both India and Africa, the delegates at the meet elucidated the need to take appropriate steps in the areas of joint biomedical research, medical education, and pharmaceutical manufacturing and trade. Progress in these areas will ensure that critical health products and services are accessible to marginalized and neglected populations at a price they can afford.

Highlighting the way forward, eminent scientist and former secretary of the Department of Biotechnology, Dr. M. K. Bhan, said: “It is imperative to bring world class training coupled with executional brilliance in both medical education and research, to boost health ecosystems”.

Added Dr Soumya Swaminathan, Director General, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), “The principles for this partnership are clear. It will be reciprocal and built on complementary strengths for developing excellence in clinical and biomedical research in both regions”.

Addressing the delegates and participants at the closing day of the meet, Chief Guest Dr Jitendra Singh, Hon’ble Minister of State (MoS)- Independent Charge for Development of North Eastern Region , who represented the PMO, said, “Our political leadership led by the honorable Prime Minister is extremely forward looking in promoting both science and technology as well as strengthening relationships between India and Africa. There could not be a more opportune time to have this meeting. ”

The recommendations broadly focused on how capacities can be jointly built and strengthened in health and research, to improve the delivery of care, address diseases of common concern and achieve shared health goals. Towards this goal, the meet presented a comprehensive strategy and action plan with a firm resolve to periodically hold such meetings in the future.

Amar Sinha, Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, said: “While the Africa Health Fund was announced by the Honourable Prime Minister, last year, a well thought out strategy and plan is needed to achieve its goal.”

The historic event, representing an important milestone in global South-South collaboration, witnessed the presence of Honourable cabinet ministers including, Shri. Jagat Prakash Nadda, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Dr. HarshVardhan, Ministry of Science and Technology, Gen. V. K. Singh, Ministry of External Affairs, Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Shri. Faggan Singh Kulaste and Smt. Anupriya Patel, Ministers of State for Health and Family Welfare, and Health Ministers of six African nations.

Jointly organised by ICMR, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and the Ministry of External Affairs, the three-day meet offered a common platform to policy makers, technocrats, scientists, medical specialists, researchers and industry leaders from the two regions. The Ministries of Commerce and Industry, Science and Technology, and Chemicals and Fertilizers, were also involved to bring synergies to engage with Africa. This is the first time five ministries joined hands with the aim of a harmonized and synergistic approach to engagement with Africa, in the area of health.