

KHF welcomes African Medicines Agency treaty cabinet approval

...implores MPs to fast-track legislative process to ratify the AMA Treaty, with potential opportunity to secure local hosting of the continental Agency

13/05... The Kenya Health Federation (KHF) has welcomed the cabinet's approval to ratify the African Medicines Agency (AMA) Treaty.

On Thursday, the cabinet chaired by President Uhuru Kenyatta approved the ratification of the African Union Treaty for the Establishment of the African Medicines Agency (AMA), which now awaits the passing of the necessary legislative instruments at the National Assembly.

Speaking when he confirmed KHF's support for the ratification of the AMA instrument, KHF chairperson Dr Kanyenje Gakombe said local health stakeholders would provide the necessary support to the Government in the race towards the establishment of AMA Headquarters in Kenya.

The establishment of AMA in Kenya, he said, will provide the country with an opportunity to leverage foreign direct investment flows estimated at more than Kshs 570 billion in the short-to-medium term.

The establishment of AMA locally, Dr Gakombe said, will enhance our national competitiveness as a healthcare and pharmaceutical manufacturing hub in sub-Saharan Africa. He noted that the AMA Treaty ratification will strengthen our national positioning as a pharmaceutical, health products and technologies investment destination.

"KHF, which is the Health Sector Board of the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA), salutes the cabinet and the Ministry of Health for moving a step further towards the signing and ratification of the AMA Treaty," Dr Gakombe said.

He added: "We now humbly request our Members of Parliament to prioritise the passing of the legislative instruments to boost further our chance of hosting the AMA in Kenya. The support of Health Cabinet Secretary Mutahi Kagwe and his officers in this journey has been immense and commendable."

Based on the recent securing of a US\$500 million investment commitment by pharmaceutical biotechnology firm Moderna seeking to set up a manufacturing plant in Kenya, KHF estimates that the hosting of AMA in Kenya will ignite a tenfold commitment to similar investments.

"Kenya is currently well placed and resourced intellectually to act as the AMA host site of choice. The recent commitment by Moderna is a good example, and we have a good chance to scale up the commitments ten times if we push and lobby for the hosting of AMA in Kenya," Dr Gakombe said

He further noted that the hosting of AMA in Kenya and the proposed setting up of the Moderna manufacturing plant would provide immense social and economic benefits, including quality job creation, while securing our national competitiveness as the home of big pharma in Africa. Said Dr Gakombe, "We are confident that these two opportunities; Moderna Manufacturing Facility and AMA, present huge benefits for our country and its citizens, which include, among others; sustainable supply chains, technology transfer, knowledge transfer, skills transfer, manufacture of complex and more advanced medicines and economic empowerment through the creation of new quality jobs and export opportunities."

The AMA Treaty entered into force on 5th November 2021 upon depositing the 15th Instrument of ratification at the African Union Commission. AMA is an African Continental Agency that contributes to the improved regulation of medicines, medical products and technologies and to advance the implementation of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan of Africa. This will further cement the Business Case for Kenya as a Hub for high quality and affordable health products, health Technologies and healthcare provision/delivery attracting investments in Biopharmaceuticals, vaccines, related medical products and infrastructure and therefore catapulting Kenya to a leadership position in the sustainable supply of pharmaceuticals, vaccines, medical products, medical technologies, healthcare technology and service delivery.

Ends

Notes to Editors

The local healthcare system, with its large and well-trained and skilled workforce, including specialists in state-of-the-art medical facilities spread across the public and private sector, makes Kenya ideal for the Moderna Vaccine Manufacture. The establishment of the Kenya Biovax Ltd. and the formation of a National Multi-Agency Committee of Human Vaccine Production by the Government of Kenya was one of the first steps toward realizing human vaccine manufacturing in Kenya.

While the Moderna Vaccine manufacturing plant will be the first of its kind in Kenya, it is noteworthy that Kenya has been manufacturing animal vaccines through the Kenya Veterinary Vaccines Production Institute. This experience can be leveraged in setting up and running the proposed COVID19 manufacturing plant.

Research, development, and production of COVID-19 vaccines in Africa is critical to ensure the sustainable supply of vaccines to enable a quicker response to other infectious agents in the future. This approach could become a rewarding investment for companies, governments, and funders since Africa's demand for vaccines already makes up about a quarter of global vaccine volume and is expected to increase with the region's estimated 2.5% annual population growth.

Since the inception of the Kenya Expanded Programmes on Immunization (KEPI) in 1980 as a part of the Global Expanded Programmes for Immunization, Kenya has made significant progress in the prevention of many vaccine-preventable killer human diseases.

This was followed by the initiation of several vaccine programs like the Kenya Aids Vaccine Initiative - Institute of Clinical Research (KAVI -ICR). KAVI - ICR is a research unit, established in 1998, that has successfully undertaken numerous HIV vaccine trials, drug trials, epidemiological, and basic research projects. In addition, the Kenya Medical Research Institute (KEMRI)- Wellcome Trust Research Programmes formally established in 1989, is a partnership between KEMRI, Oxford University, and the Wellcome Trust.

KEMRI has grown from its humble beginnings over 40 years ago to become a regional leader in human health research, including vaccine research, and currently ranks as one of the leading Centres of excellence in health research both in Africa and globally. It conducts basic, epidemiological, and clinical research in parallel and aims to expand the country's capacity to conduct multidisciplinary research that is strong, sustainable, and internationally competitive. In 2021, Kenya launched the first malaria vaccine (RTS, S) administration alongside Malawi and Ghana, following three decades of research on the vaccine.

This ongoing discussion demonstrates that Kenya is well equipped with expertise for vaccine research, clinical trials, epidemiological studies, and pharmacovigilance studies. A local manufacturing plant for the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine will ramp up Kenya's human vaccine resources and contribute to the achievement of UHC, which includes ensuring that all citizens live free of vaccine-preventable diseases. Notably, this initiative will serve as a benchmark and guide for other vaccine and drug manufacturing facilities in Kenya and the region, even as Kenya attracts health investors.
