**Unite for Global Health Security**

**Date:** 24 September 2025
**Venue:** United Nations Headquarters, New York – Conference Room 4
**Time:** 13:15 – 14:25

**Background**

On the margins of the 80th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA80), the **Global Leaders Network (GLN) for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health** and the **Africa Leaders Malaria Alliance (ALMA)** convened a high-level joint session under the banner *Unite for Global Health Security*.

The merger of GLN and ALMA reflects a strategic consolidation of political leadership to address the most urgent global health challenges: declining official development assistance (ODA), the erosion of decades of progress due to protracted conflicts and fragility, and the urgent need to safeguard women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health (WCAH) while accelerating malaria elimination.

The event was chaired by the Right Honourable Helen Clark, Chair of the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH) and former Prime Minister of New Zealand. She underscored that the meeting marked the third consecutive year of GLN coordination at UNGA, highlighting the network’s expansion to include 11 Heads of State. She stressed the urgency of recommitting global health financing and collective action given the sharp reductions in ODA and the complex realities of the current global health landscape.

**Proceedings**

**Keynote Address by His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa, Chair of the Global Leaders Network and President of the Republic of South Africa**

President Ramaphosa opened with gratitude to Helen Clark for her leadership and inspiration, before situating the meeting in the broader context of global health challenges. He described the GLN as a united coalition of Heads of State determined to safeguard WCAH and build consensus on global health priorities.

He emphasised that women, children, and adolescents — “those whose wellbeing defines the future of any society” — are currently carrying the heaviest burden of the world’s crises. While significant progress has been made in some areas of the SDGs, survival outcomes for mothers and children have stagnated since 2005. He warned that, without urgent action, the 2030 targets for reducing neonatal and maternal mortality will not be achieved. Adolescent girls, he highlighted, are at particular risk due to unsafe abortions and limited access to quality maternal health services, illustrating how inequities in access to care translate into preventable deaths.

President Ramaphosa underscored the devastating impact of ODA withdrawals, which are compounding the consequences of ongoing wars and conflicts. These trends, he explained, have reduced access to essential services and reversed decades of progress. Conflicts not only dismantle fragile health systems but also increase women’s and girls’ exposure to gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, and entrenched inequalities.

He concluded by reaffirming the GLN’s dedication to building stronger global ties and bonds of solidarity between nations. He issued a call to action for bold measures that preserve the health and wellbeing of vulnerable populations, stressing that this is both a moral imperative and an economic necessity given the enormous returns that are lost when these issues go unaddressed.

**Keynote Address by His Excellency President Duma Boko, Chair of the Africa Leaders Malaria Alliance and President of the Republic of Botswana**

President Boko framed his address around the growing complexity of the malaria fight, which he described as a “perfect storm” of intersecting challenges. He warned that despite decades of progress, malaria continues to disproportionately affect women, children, and adolescents, threatening to derail Africa’s wider health and development gains.

He issued a clear call to all countries and donors to commit boldly to the replenishment of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. He stressed that such investment could save 23 million lives across malaria, HIV/AIDS, and TB while simultaneously strengthening health systems. He reminded participants that global progress is possible only if leaders embrace ambition and solidarity.

Looking beyond traditional funding streams, President Boko advocated for innovative financing approaches. He urged African nations to mobilise resources from the private sector, diaspora communities, and through enhanced South-South cooperation. He specifically called on the International Monetary Fund to establish a second malaria programme for Africa, underpinned by the ALMA scorecard tool to track performance and identify investment gaps.

Turning to the future, he highlighted that the pipeline of malaria innovations has never been stronger. Africa, he stressed, must seize this opportunity by investing in research and development and by strengthening regulatory capacity. Ratification and operationalisation of the African Medicines Agency (AMA) will be crucial to accelerate access to new products.

President Boko described investment in WCAH as a “fundamental human right” and urged leaders to make bold political commitments — and to be held accountable for them. He concluded by appealing to Heads of State, governments, and private sector leaders of the Global South to unite in solidarity for this cause.

**Intervention by His Excellency President William Ruto, President of the Republic of Kenya**

President Ruto delivered a forceful intervention centred on African self-reliance. He declared that “the question is not if Africa can finance its own health systems, it is how quickly we are able to do so.” He stressed the urgency of moving away from dependence on borrowed resources and externally imposed strategies.

He reaffirmed Kenya’s full commitment to ALMA and to malaria elimination, citing the launch of Kenya’s new National Health Framework in 2025 as evidence of renewed national determination. He highlighted that rigorous national and continental resource mobilisation will be required to sustain progress, especially in the face of ODA cuts.

President Ruto asserted that Africa’s demand for fair pricing and technology transfer is a matter of justice, not charity. He underlined that Africa is not seeking permission to lead but is already demonstrating leadership. What is needed are partnerships underpinned by mutual respect and shared responsibility.

**Remarks by His Excellency Vice President Muhamma B.S. Jallow, Vice President of the Republic of The Gambia**

Vice President Jallow acknowledged the critical contributions of the Global Fund over the past two decades in supporting health system strengthening and malaria programmes in The Gambia. He pointed to specific national successes in malaria booster programmes as examples of the tangible benefits of international support.

He warned that ODA reductions demand fresh approaches, such as expanding public-private partnerships. Despite the challenges, he affirmed the possibility of malaria elimination, concluding with the rallying declaration: *“Zero malaria starts with me, with us, and with all of us.”*

**Remarks by Dr Jean Kaseya, Director-General, Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention**

Dr Kaseya identified four critical challenges: cross-border disease management, weak ownership and quality of health data, declining ODA, and the central importance of political leadership. He emphasised that Africa cannot address crises without data sovereignty and stronger regional coordination.

He praised President Ramaphosa’s leadership as Africa’s Champion for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, noting that high-level political commitment is essential to strengthening Africa’s ability to manage present and future crises.

**Remarks by Ms Diene Keita, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (on behalf of WHO and UNICEF)**

Ms Keita conveyed a united message from the UN system, urging leaders to recommit to the fight against all preventable deaths, particularly those affecting women, children, and adolescents. She highlighted the impact of malaria on WCAH outcomes and underscored that investment in these populations is the “best investment with the highest return” across global development.

**Remarks by Dr Sania Nishtar, Chief Executive Officer, Gavi**

Dr Nishtar stressed the urgency of designing a new global health ecosystem capable of supporting countries more effectively. She emphasised Gavi’s commitment to this transformation, noting that 80 per cent of replenishment funds raised through the Gavi Multiplier Initiative will be channelled to Africa.

She celebrated the roll-out of the malaria vaccine in 23 countries, which has already achieved a 13 per cent reduction in paediatric malaria deaths. She reaffirmed Gavi’s readiness to partner with African governments to scale innovations that deliver measurable impact.

**Remarks by Her Excellency Nardos Bekele-Thomas, Chief Executive Officer, AUDA-NEPAD**

Ms Bekele-Thomas described the joint convening of GLN and ALMA as a strong signal to governments of renewed political commitment. She highlighted Africa’s rapidly growing youth population as both a challenge and an opportunity to harness innovation and private sector dynamism. She confirmed that AUDA-NEPAD stands ready to support governments to address these challenges through coordinated policies and to facilitate the implementation of GLN strategies.

**Statement of Solidarity by Professor Senait Fisseha, Global Champion for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights**

Professor Fisseha closed the proceedings with a call for continued leadership on sexual and reproductive health and rights. She emphasised the need for political leaders to commit to eliminating preventable premature deaths of women, children, and adolescents, underscoring that SRHR must remain integral to the broader global health agenda.

**Key Outcomes**

1. **Renewed Political Commitment:** Leaders reaffirmed their dedication to WCAH and malaria elimination, uniting GLN and ALMA as a consolidated political platform.
2. **Urgency of Financing:** Consensus emerged on the need to respond to ODA reductions with bold replenishment of the Global Fund, alongside innovative domestic and regional financing mechanisms.
3. **African Leadership:** Strong emphasis was placed on accelerating domestic resource mobilisation, advancing R&D, operationalising the AMA, and strengthening regional manufacturing capacity.
4. **Accountability and Monitoring:** Leaders endorsed the use of tools such as the ALMA scorecard and GLN frameworks to ensure accountability and track progress.
5. **Global Partnerships:** UN agencies, Gavi, and AUDA-NEPAD signalled strong alignment with African-led priorities and readiness to support the implementation of GLN and ALMA strategies.

**Call to Actions Made**

* Support the replenishment of the Global Fund and mobilise innovative financing, including private sector and diaspora contributions.
* Accelerate ratification and operationalisation of the African Medicines Agency to support regulatory capacity and access to innovations.
* Institutionalise domestic resource mobilisation within national health strategies to secure sustainable funding for WCAH and malaria.
* Expand use of accountability frameworks, such as the ALMA scorecard, to maintain political momentum.
* Strengthen equitable partnerships grounded in fair pricing, technology transfer, and mutual respect.

**Conclusion**

The joint GLN–ALMA session at UNGA80 demonstrated strong African and global leadership on WCAH and malaria elimination. The meeting highlighted the urgent risks posed by declining ODA, conflict, and fragile health systems, while presenting a united vision for bold investment, accountability, and Africa-led solutions.

By consolidating political leadership, investing in regulatory and manufacturing capacity, and demanding equitable partnerships, Africa has positioned itself to safeguard the health of women, children, and adolescents while driving progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.