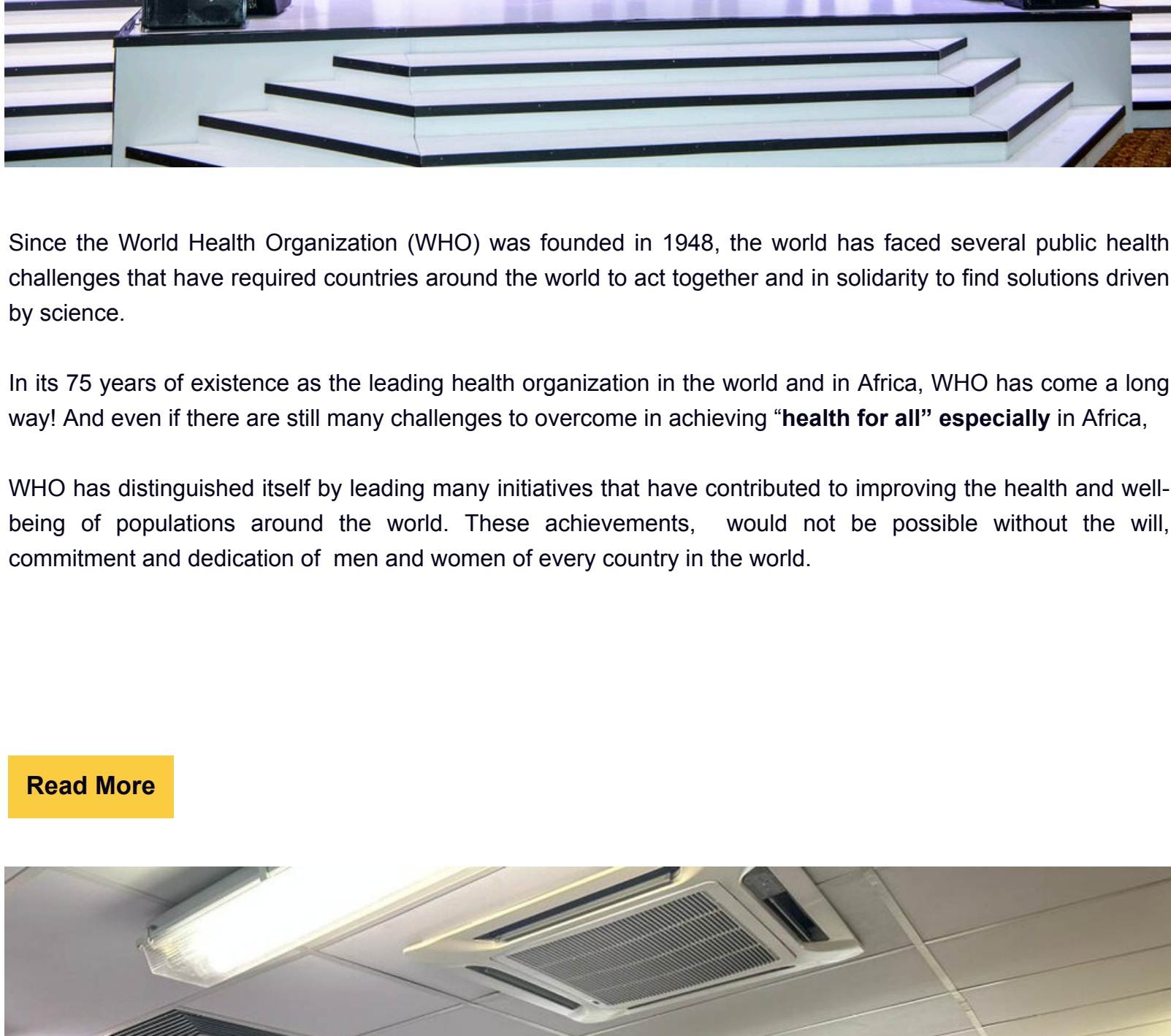




At its 75th anniversary, WHO honors former leaders for their contributions to public health

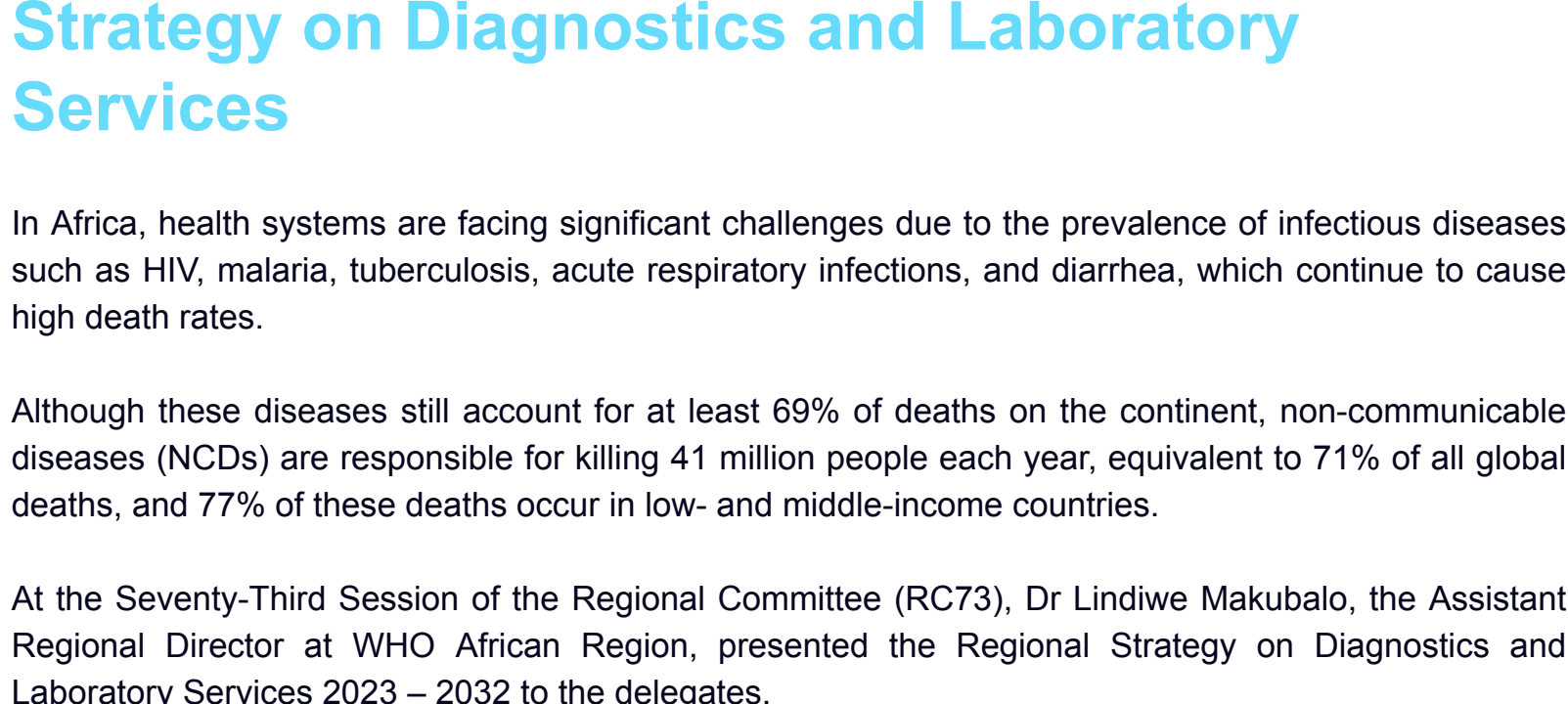


Since the World Health Organization (WHO) was founded in 1948, the world has faced several public health challenges that have required countries around the world to act together and in solidarity to find solutions driven by science.

In its 75 years of existence as the leading health organization in the world and in Africa, WHO has come a long way! And even if there are still many challenges to overcome in achieving "health for all" especially in Africa,

WHO has distinguished itself by leading many initiatives that have contributed to improving the health and well-being of populations around the world. These achievements, would not be possible without the will, commitment and dedication of men and women of every country in the world.

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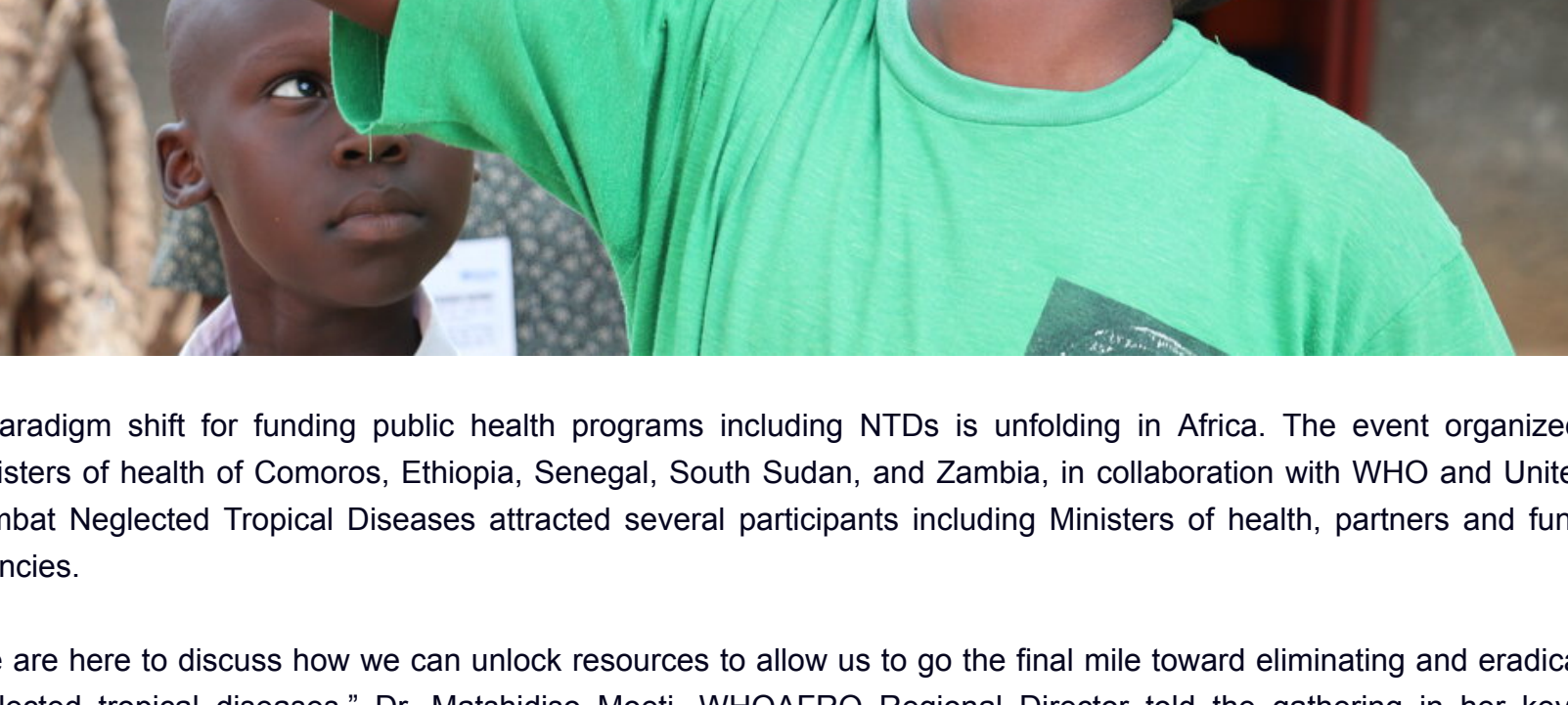
African Health Ministers endorse Regional Strategy on Diagnostics and Laboratory Services

In Africa, health systems are facing significant challenges due to the prevalence of infectious diseases such as HIV, malaria, tuberculosis, acute respiratory infections, and diarrhea, which continue to cause high death rates.

Although these diseases still account for at least 69% of deaths on the continent, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are responsible for killing 41 million people each year, equivalent to 71% of all global deaths, and 77% of these deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries.

At the Seventy-Third Session of the Regional Committee (RC73), Dr Lindiwe Makubalo, the Assistant Regional Director at WHO African Region, presented the Regional Strategy on Diagnostics and Laboratory Services 2023 – 2032 to the delegates.

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New funding opportunities for NTDs promise to end the neglect



A paradigm shift for funding public health programs including NTDs is unfolding in Africa. The event organized by ministers of health of Comoros, Ethiopia, Senegal, South Sudan, and Zambia, in collaboration with WHO and United to Combat Neglected Tropical Diseases attracted several participants including Ministers of health, partners and funding agencies.

"We are here to discuss how we can unlock resources to allow us to go the final mile toward eliminating and eradicating neglected tropical diseases," Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, WHOAFRO Regional Director told the gathering in her keynote address.

Speakers from funding agencies and countries responding to NTDs noted that despite the well-known high return of investment in NTD programs estimated at US\$ 25 per 1 US\$ invested, there is donor fatigue and difficulties in funding health programs against a backdrop of global economic and political instability. The interventions are simple and require non-specialists to implement and yet lead to better education, health, and employment outcomes, as well as supporting livelihoods.

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UHC: A Golden opportunity and vehicle to save lives in Africa - Its Framework adopted at the RC73



The Framework for "Sustaining a Resilient Health System Towards Achieving Universal Health Coverage and Promoting Health Security (2023-2030) in the African Region", was discussed and adopted by the Honorable Ministers attending RC73, who saw this as a golden opportunity to save lives.

The Framework was presented by Dr. Janet Kayita, Team Lead of Child and Adolescent Health (CAH) in the Universal Health Coverage/Life Course Cluster of WHO Regional Office. She thanked the Member States for putting Universal Health Coverage at the top of the national agenda as well as for being members of various regional and global initiatives that advocate for increased domestic funding for health, reinforce the health workforce, community engagement, health security and well-being, especially for the most vulnerable populations.

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A fully operational Africa Medicine Agency Stressed at RC 73



Access to medical products that are of high-quality, safe, and effective is a core pillar of Universal Health Coverage. In 2014, WHO recognized the importance of having a strong regulatory mechanism across the African continent and set the foundation for the creation of a continental pharmaceutical regulatory body in Africa. This led to the African Medicine Agency (AMA) Treaty, adopted in February 2019 by the African Union (AU) Heads of State.

To date, 26 AU Member States have signed and ratified the AMA Treaty. Thanks to his high-level advocacy effort led by Dr Michel Sidibé African Union Special Envoy for the AMA the treaty entered into force earlier than expected on November 5, 2021, although AMA have not yet begun.

On the sidelines of the RC 73 in Gaborone, WHO/AFRO member states discussed the challenges of and opportunities for operationalizing AMA.

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Celebrating One Year of Actioning Africa's Commitment to Health Security



Africa is highly vulnerable to outbreaks of infectious diseases, facing over 100 significant public health events every year. In addition, the convergence of conflict and climate-induced health emergencies further compounds these health threats.

"In recent years, we have seen the devastating impact of the Ebola epidemic and the COVID-19 pandemic. These disease outbreaks caused widespread suffering, significantly impacting Africa's economy and development," said Hon. Sethomo Lelatlatswe, Assistant Minister of Health and Wellness, Botswana. "They exposed gaps in our health service provision, showed us our weak coordination mechanisms, our limited health workforce, and stockpiles. Botswana is committed to changing the narrative", underscored Hon. Lelatlatswe.

To address health emergencies, at the 2022 WHO Regional Committee for Africa Meeting, Member States endorsed the Regional Strategy for Health Security 2022-2030. The strategy aims to change how countries protect people from health emergencies.

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Community health in African countries: myth or reality?

Community health is an integral part of public health by constituting a strategy within health promotion approaches. Its specificity is to be population-based and not individualistic, to promote and implement a global and local vision of health. This participatory vision of health is enshrined in the constitution of the WHO : "enlightened public opinion and active cooperation on the part of the public are of paramount importance for the improvement of the health of populations".From this point of view, what is the place of promotion of community health in the health policies of African States?



Professor Benjamin HOUNKPATIN, Benin Minister of Health explains the specificities of the new national community health policy in Benin.

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"Interrupting the transmission of all poliovirus in the African region", a major challenge that WHO



This commitment was at the heart of discussions at the RC73 which is being held from August 28 to September 1, 2023 in the Botswana capital, Gaborone.

The special high-level event mobilized Ministers, partners of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) and various experts in public health and the polio response, WHO Representatives and experts at the country, regional and headquarters levels.

It saw, among others, the participation of eminent personalities from the world of health such as Dr. Chris Elias of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Dr. Jamal Ahmed, coordinator of the polio eradication program at the regional office of the WHO for Africa and Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa.

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RC73 Delegates adopt a strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol in the region



To ensure a region free of harmful alcohol consumption, the Honorable Ministers attending RC 73 adopted "The Framework for the Implementation of the Global Alcohol Action Plan 2022-2030".

While introducing the framework, Dr Benido Impouma UHC Communicable and Non-communicable disease cluster director stated that the harmful use of alcohol is a causal factor for more than 200 diseases and injuries. Moreover, drug use, drug use disorders, and other addictive behaviors are also increasing in the African Region.

"After more than twenty years of adopting the last strategy for alcohol prevention in the region, WHO/AFRO is presenting a strategic framework to accelerate the initiatives to reduce significantly the morbidity, disability, and mortality due to alcohol consumption", he said.

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