



WEST AFRICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
ORGANISATION OUEST AFRICAINE DE LA SANTE  
ORGANIZAÇÃO OESTE AFRICANA DA SAÚDE



Ministério  
da Saúde



## PRESS RELEASE

Praia, Cabo Verde, 20 May 2025

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# ECOWAS Health Ministers Adopt Landmark Regional Policy on Community Health and Renew Commitment to Health Systems Strengthening

**Praia, Cabo Verde – On 10th May 2025**, the 26th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Health Ministers of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) concluded with a bold call to action: ***to strengthen the region's health systems, increase domestic health financing, and ensure universal and equitable access to quality healthcare services for all.***



Held from 9 to 10 May 2025 in Praia, Cabo Verde, the high-level meeting brought together Health Ministers from eleven ECOWAS Member States, technical and financial partners, representatives of regional and international organisations and key stakeholders. The session was chaired by Honourable Dr. Iziaq Adekunle Salako, Minister of State for Health and Social Welfare of Nigeria.

In his keynote address, H.E. Mr. Ulisses Correia e Silva, Prime Minister of Cabo Verde, reaffirmed the country's commitment to a healthier West Africa. He highlighted the vital role of health in human, economic, and social development, the Prime Minister emphasized the need for integrated public policies spanning food security, vaccination, professional training, and medication access. He applauded the focus on community health as a cornerstone for improving care accessibility and strengthening health system resilience.

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“We celebrate the focus on community health,” he noted, urging collaboration across the region to turn shared challenges into collective achievements.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Melchior Aïssi, Director General of the West African Health Organisation (WAHO), presented a sobering picture of rising epidemic threats in the region—67 outbreaks in 12 countries in 2024 alone, and stressed the urgency of acting on social determinants of health.

Dr. Aïssi highlighted the progress made in 2024, including an 81% implementation rate of WAHO’s workplan, and called for greater resilience and innovation. “This session marks a paradigm shift through the adoption of a Regional Community Health Policy based on consensual standards and principles,” he stated. He also urged countries to rally around pooled procurement of medicines, local vaccine production, and endogenous solutions to reduced external funding, notably following cuts from USAID.



The Ministers adopted the Regional Community Health Policy along with its implementation guidelines, marking a key step toward coordinated, people-centred health strategies across the region. They also approved the 2024 Annual Report of WAHO, praising the organisation’s leadership and programme achievements.





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Furthermore, the Ministers welcomed regional initiatives such as pooled pharmaceutical procurement, the development of a Lassa fever vaccine, and a roadmap for local pharmaceutical production. Finally, they called for greater investment in community health workers, stronger disease surveillance systems, and sustainable domestic financing to counter the decline in external aid.

The Assembly also endorsed a regional dialogue on the malaria elimination agenda, which will be the focus of the next Ordinary Session.

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