



## **Press Release N° 147/2018**

### **Trauma management and care for victims of fatal injuries dominate discussions at the African Union.**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 16 September 2018;** Statistics from the World Health Organization indicate that almost 90 percent of deaths globally, are due to fatal injuries and occur in low and middle-income countries. 30 percent of these deaths are linked to road accidents, making them among the top 10 causes of death in low- and middle-income countries. Trauma, in particular, remains a neglected cause of death and disability in these countries, leaving close to 5 million people dead each year; more than all deaths due to HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined, yet, continues to receive the least attention in terms of awareness and resource allocation. Africa shares a significant proportion of the burden of death and disability from the fatal injuries, therefore calling for more concerted action towards a holistic approach to address this predicament.

It is on that background that the African Union Commission hosted the Coalition for Dialogue on Africa (CoDA) and the AO Alliance Foundation for a policy dialogue on the “Challenges of Trauma and Care of the Injured in Africa”. Chaired by H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Chair of CoDA, the dialogue focused on the neglected causes and the burden of death and disability from injuries in Low- and Middle-Income Countries, the need to increase advocacy to raise awareness on trauma care in these countries and the establishment of an agenda for action. This agenda action would essential identify the various responsibilities of the

different actors and would seek means of consolidating data, financial and human resource allocation, to deal with trauma care.

In his opening remarks, H.E. Obasanjo observed that the dialogue was timely and critical and an important platform for all to exchange ideas, experiences and perspectives on reducing the causes of these deaths. "Our people are the most important asset we have, therefore, it is only common sense that we should always work to protect that which is most important to us" he stated. He called for concerted action by all stakeholders; African leaders, policy makers, experts, caregivers and the citizenry; to endeavour to enhance awareness and consolidate action to address the staggering magnitude of the fatal injuries from a bottom-top approach that includes prevention but also offering the necessary trauma care to victims and their immediate support system. He added, "it is only when all of us here and by extension other key stakeholders become a part of this important discussion to curb the burden of trauma in Africa that we will begin to see positive changes on the matter".

Among the reasons why trauma remains devastating in many low and middle-income countries, are the inadequate systems of hospital and community-based emergency care in place in these countries. In addition to this, other challenges such as constrained resources and lack of trained health care workforces contribute to the problem. The Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission Amb. Kwesi Quartey, in this regard, underscored the need for the acquisition of Knowledge and its dissemination regarding patterns of injuries noting that such knowledge would assist in determining how such care can be improved and would have a significant impact on disability as well as mortality rates. He concluded by saying that "sufficient research is needed to inform our policymakers, improve our clinical practice, and contribute to our advances in knowledge. A consistent theme which has hampered progress on this issue is the lack of data available. There is a lack of data on road traffic injuries as well as trauma cases and without such data, public officials cannot be expected to recognize trauma and injuries as serious public health problems."

Dr. Rolf Jeker, President of the AO Alliance Foundation while echoing similar sentiments underscored the lack of care for the injured resulting to unnecessary deaths as a major cause of the negative impact on the incomes of African nations. He observed that while the challenge goes beyond road accidents, it was crucial for enhanced advocacy around prevention as the best way to address this issue as much as post-accident care is as important, however unfortunately highly neglected in Low and Middle Income Countries. Concluding on a more hopeful standpoint, Dr. Jeker highlighted the cost effective solutions for Low and Middle Income Countries to tackle the problem given the adequate amount of political will from Africa's leaders.

The high level policy brought together high level participants including H.E. John Mahama, former President of the Republic of Ghana, Ministers of Health from Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria, international partners such as the UNECA, World Health Organization, the Kingdoms of Norway and Denmark as well as Australia complemented by the presence of AU Commissioner for Social Affairs, Mrs. Amira El Fadil Mohammed Fadil. In their interventions, all discussants acknowledged that despite the discouraging situation, many African countries have been acting on creating more awareness on the preventive and curative aspects to address the challenges of trauma and care of the injured following tragedies. Strengthened road safety institutions and improved emergency services, are just some of the steps which have been taken.

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