

## **JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT**

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### **South Africa and Unitaid partner to accelerate access to health innovations for HIV, tuberculosis and cervical cancer**

The Department of Health and Unitaid signed a memorandum of understanding that reinforces their commitment to tackle HIV, Tuberculosis (TB) and cervical cancer while strengthening the resilience of African health programs through regional production of health products.

The renewed partnership will focus on curbing HIV and TB through the introduction of game-changing innovative health products, such as lenacapavir, biannual injectable HIV prevention option, and shorter regimens to treat drug-resistant TB; eliminating cervical cancer by increasing access to screening and preventive treatment; and strengthening health responses by scaling up regional manufacturing of diagnostic tests and treatments.

South Africa has been at the forefront in the fight against HIV and TB, making significant progress in providing access to testing, treatment and care for millions of people. However, the country continues to face major health challenges: it has the highest number of people living with HIV in the world – over 7.5 million – and one of the highest TB burdens. Cervical cancer is the leading cause of cancer-related mortality among women in the country. Addressing these challenges requires sustained investment in innovation, ensuring that people can access high-quality, effective and affordable health products and services.

“Together with Unitaid, we have pioneered breakthroughs in HIV and TB. Building on this success we are now expanding our cooperation to realize our goal to eliminate cervical cancer and to strengthen our capacity to produce essential health products at scale,” said South African Minister of Health Dr Aaron Motsoaledi.

“South Africa’s leadership in introducing game-changing health products has been instrumental in advancing many of Unitaid’s most successful initiatives,” said Tenu Avafia, Unitaid Deputy Executive Director. “In line with the Lusaka agenda, we are deeply committed to supporting South Africa to address health inequities and to deliver innovative and accessible health solutions to all.”

This agreement builds on the successful partnership between Unitaid and South Africa, established in 2018, which played a key role in accelerating access to health innovations such as HIV self-tests, an array of HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) options, shorter TB prevention regimens, and shorter, less toxic treatments for drug-resistant TB.

The new agreement was signed on the sidelines of the G20 Health Working Group Meeting held in Zimbali, outside Durban in KwaZulu-Natal on 26-28 March. South Africa's G20 presidency emphasizes the need for equitable solutions and collaborative approaches to address the health challenges of the 21st century through universal health coverage.

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