



Reclaiming Rights. Rebuilding Lives!

Honorable Excellencies, Delegates, Commissioners, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen- This year's session takes place under the theme of Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations, reminding us that reparatory justice, dignity, and healing must guide our deliberations.

Honorable Commissioners - **every preventable death caused by Africa's neglected and underfunded health systems is not just a tragedy-but also echoes of slavery, colonialism, and extraction that left our systems inequitable.** The path to justice begins here and true reparations must start with financing health as a fundamental right.

I, Hortense Minishi, speak on behalf of the Kenya Legal and Ethical Issues Network on HIV and AIDS (KELIN).

Across Africa, **inadequate health financing remains one of the greatest barriers to realizing the right to health** guaranteed under Article 16 of the African Charter and other international, regional, and domestic legal frameworks. Despite the Abuja Declaration's 15% target, most African States, including Kenya, allocate far less. The consequences are stark: under-resourced health systems, life-saving medicines out of reach, unbearable out-of-pocket spending, and millions of preventable deaths. Women, children, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities bear the heaviest burden. This persistent exclusion undermines dignity and healing, which reparatory justice seeks to restore.

This crisis does not exist in a vacuum. It is rooted in **legacies of slavery, colonialism, and extractive systems that built wealth for others while leaving Africa's health infrastructures fragile, inequitable, and underfunded.** Colonial administrations invested in settler health and

extractive industries, not in building universal systems for African populations. These distorted priorities were inherited at independence and reinforced by structural adjustment programs and debt regimes that have continued to limit fiscal space for public health. To this day, extractive global economic structures divert resources outward, deepening inequities and undermining access to affordable healthcare.

The 2025 USAID funding cuts have further deepened this crisis and vulnerabilities—disrupting HIV programs, maternal and child health services, and malaria control. UNAIDS warns of up to 6 million new HIV infections and 4 million AIDS-related deaths by 2029, and studies project over 14 million preventable deaths globally by 2030 if these cuts persist. The World Health Organization (WHO) has also raised alarms that countries like Kenya, Lesotho, South Sudan, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria may soon run out of life-saving antiretrovirals medicines. **The impact of the funding cuts extends far beyond HIV programming—it threatens to destabilize the entire health ecosystem.**

KELIN, together with other human rights organizations and civil society, continue to demand for stronger accountability and sustained investment in Africa's health systems. We respectfully call upon the African Commission to:

- i. **Position health financing as central to reparatory justice**, explicitly dismantling colonial health financing legacies while ensuring dignity and redress for historically marginalized groups,
- ii. **Urge States to increase domestic financing** for health in line with the Abuja Declaration, their constitutions, and other treaty obligations.
- iii. **Monitor and report** on violations, and **recommend sustainable, rights-based domestic resource mobilization strategies** that reduce dependency on external donors.
- iv. **Encourage transparent, participatory, and gender-responsive budgeting** processes that meaningfully involve civil society and affected communities
- v. **Hold States accountable** during the State reporting process and insist on concrete, practical measures to realize the right to health.
- vi. **Call on international financial and development institutions** to review harmful financing policies through a reparations lens.

KELIN stands in solidarity with partners calling for a pause in the ratification of the AU Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls to allow for inclusive review and alignment with existing African and international human rights standards.

Honourable Commissioners, one thing is undisputable, universal health coverage cannot be achieved without adequate and sustainable financing. Health in Africa must never be treated as a privilege—it is a right. Financing it is not charity. It is reparations owed, justice due, and dignity restored.

Thank you.