

**Royal Summit on Accelerating Maternal and Child Survival and Ending
Infectious Diseases in Africa
31 May – 2 June 2026 | Johannesburg, South Africa**

2 June 2026



Preamble

We, traditional and customary authorities¹ from across the African continent, gathered in Johannesburg from 31 May to 2 June 2026, for the historic Royal Summit to accelerate progress on maternal and child survival and the prevention and elimination of infectious diseases in Africa, including malaria and in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDG3).

We met at a decisive moment. Too many mothers, newborns and children continue to lose their lives to causes that can be prevented, treated or eradicated. These losses are not inevitable. They can be reduced through stronger community action, trusted information, resilient health systems, sustained financing and visible leadership at every level.

We acknowledge the essential role of governments, health workers, communities, civil society, development partners and the private sector. We also affirm that progress cannot rely on formal health systems alone.

Communities must be mobilized, informed and supported, and traditional leadership has a distinctive role to play in building trust, reinforcing accountability and turning global and national ambitions into local action. Through this Summit, we have developed a **shared understanding of the challenge and opportunities that will shape future progress.**

Through the Royal Summit discussions, testimonies of lived experience and joint deliberations, we recognize that health outcomes are shaped not only by the availability of services, but also by community realities.

Access to care, misinformation, stigma, detrimental working conditions for women, harmful socio-cultural and gender norms, weak referral pathways, unaffordable services, insecurity and low trust can determine whether a pregnant woman seeks care, whether a child receives treatment in time, whether households use proven prevention tools, and whether outbreaks are detected early.

¹ Kings, Queens, Sultans, Emirs, Princes, Princesses, and Chiefs

We therefore affirm that malaria elimination, maternal and child survival, and the reduction of preventable infectious diseases require both technical solutions and trusted community leadership. Medicines, diagnostics, vaccines, bed nets, antenatal care, skilled health workers, nutrition, and sanitation save lives when communities can have access to them, understand their value, and trust the systems that deliver them.

Our unique role as traditional and customary authorities

We recognize that, we, traditional and customary authorities, hold legitimacy, continuity and proximity that can complement the work of governments, health workers, and development and business partners.

Our leadership can contribute by:

- supporting trusted communication in languages and formats communities understand;
- helping address concerns, fears and misinformation without blame or stigma;
- strengthening local accountability and dialogue between communities and health services;
- advocating for the needs of our communities with governments and partners.

Collective commitment

We hereby establish a unified continental movement of Traditional and Customary Authorities to accelerate maternal and child survival, eradicate malaria, and reduce preventable infectious diseases across Africa.

This movement will build on and connect existing platforms of traditional and customary authorities across the continent. It will be supported by a lean secretariat mandated to coordinate follow-up, enable peer learning, support communication, align on targets and milestones and track progress, and facilitate engagement with governments, technical partners and funders.

We commit to moving beyond dialogue. We will translate the commitments of this Summit into practical action within our territories, communities and spheres of influence, with clear priorities, visible leadership, and regular accountability.

Pursuit of this shared vision, and drawing on the rich diversity of our traditions, cultures, customs and territories, we translate our collective agreement into the following commitments:

- I. **Lead a continental movement for community-led health action:** To make use the power, legitimacy and influence of traditional leadership to educate, sensitize and mobilize communities on maternal and child health.
- II. **Mobilize communities for malaria prevention, testing and treatment:** To support practical community action that contributes to malaria elimination by strengthening awareness, prevention and access to malaria treatment, bringing solutions closer to communities
- III. **Pool local efforts and resources so no one is left behind:** To establish a system for pooling local efforts and resources, in order to ensure access to health services for the most vulnerable

- ## Support and partnership asks

We call on governments, health authorities, partners, civil society, technical experts and funding institutions to work with traditional leadership in a spirit of partnership and respect.

We affirm that traditional leadership does not replace health systems. It strengthens the connection between health systems and communities.

Closing Declaration

We agree that the commitments and action plans developed during the Royal Summit should not remain isolated statements.

We leave this Summit with a shared conviction: the health of mothers, newborns, children and families is not only a medical concern, but also a community responsibility and a leadership responsibility.

As Traditional and Customary authorities, we commit to use our authority, proximity and convening power to help protect life, strengthen trust and support practical action across our communities.

We call on all partners to walk with us in this effort and to recognize the essential role of traditional leadership in advancing health outcomes across Africa.



