

Remarks by Deputy Minister of Health, Dr Joe Phaahla during virtual media roundtable ahead of the Global Fund Replenishment Summit.

Theme: “Investing in Health, Investing in Africa’s Future”

Tuesday, 11 November 2025 | 13:00 to 14:00 SAST

Thank You Moderator, Ms Lerato Mbele

Françoise Vanni, representing the Global Fund

Prof Olive Shisana, President of Evidence Based Solutions

Dr Thembisile Xulu, Chief Executive Officer of SANAC

Dr Charlotte Muheki, Technical Director at Amref Health Africa

Ms Sikelewa Mdingi, Vice President, Global Health Strategies

Mia Malan, Founder Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism

Ladies and gentlemen, Member of the media

Good afternoon

Allow me to express my gratitude on behalf of Health Ministry to be part of this virtual media roundtable meant to discuss a crucial topic of Investing in Health, Investing in Africa’s Future because the world needs the strengthened, empowered and sustainably financed health systems to effectively deliver on good health.

Let me take this opportunity to address you before you dive into discussions that will, hopefully, help us to jointly make a strong investment case for the replenishment of the Global Fund, leveraging the power of the media to spread our message.

This pivotal roundtable takes place a few weeks before the world gathers for the Global Fund's Eighth Replenishment Summit here in South Africa - a moment that will define the trajectory of global health for years to come.

As a continent, we continue our journey toward building stronger, more resilient health systems that can withstand shocks and deliver for every citizen. As we strive to do that, our message is simple, yet urgent: investing in health is not a sunk cost - it is the smartest investment any nation can make in its people, its economy, and its future.

Over the past two decades, Africa has demonstrated what bold leadership and true partnership can achieve. Through the Global Fund, one of the most impactful multilateral partnerships in recent history, more than 70 million lives have been saved around the world, turning the tide against HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria.

In addition, the Global Fund has cut the death rate from AIDS, TB, and malaria by 63% in countries where it invests and reduced HIV-related deaths by 73% since 2002.

In South Africa, this partnership has enabled us to expand HIV treatment to more than **five million people**, strengthen our TB response, and invest in laboratories and community systems that now serve far beyond these three diseases.

These are not just numbers. They are health and economic outcomes that are crucial to our future as a country. We recognize that global attention can shift quickly, and gains can be reversed if we falter, hence there is an need act now, now now!

The US\$ 18 billion, (which translates into over **R311 billion**) that the Global Fund is seeking for the 2027-2029 cycle could save 23 million more lives; prevent 400 million infections and deliver a significant return on investment, with every dollar invested generating US\$19 in health and economic gain.

The Eight Replenishment Summit is not just about financing - it is a test of leadership, solidarity, and shared responsibility for the future of humanity.

Ladies and gentlemen

Let me emphasize that Africa must not only be the beneficiary of global health investment—we must be co-owners and co-investors in shaping our health future.

That means we have a great responsibility to strengthen the systems that support good health and wellbeing, including by increasing domestic resource mobilization to show our commitment; forging smarter partnerships with the private sector to unlock innovation; and ensuring accountability for every cent spent.

Our leadership cannot be passive - it must be intentional. As the global health landscape evolves and Africa finds itself at the center of the upheaval in donor financing for health and development, we must emerge as active architects of a healthier, stronger future for our continent.

In this endeavour, we see the media as not just a messenger, but also a force multiplier that will help us shape public understanding of key health issues and their contributions to development. Therefore our ask is simple: we ask you to use your platforms to tell the success stories of African innovation and leadership.

We need you to ask the tough questions that keep us honest and transparent; to hold us accountable the people we serve. Together, we can shift the narrative from Africa's aid dependency to Africa's emergence as a strategic investment destination for health.

As we head toward the Replenishment Summit, let us speak with one African voice; a voice that is confident, optimistic, and forward-looking.

Let us show the world that investing in health is investing in better future for the whole world.

In closing, let me remind you that for 20 years the Global Fund has been a lifeline for our continent. In the next chapter on Africa's growth, the Fund will become a launchpad for a continent ready to lead, innovate, and thrive - but only if we accord it the necessary support. So, let us join hands in making this a reality. Together, we can make history.

I thank you