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**PRESS RELEASE**

**EAC READIES TO ROLLOUT IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL  
INTEGRATED SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE, MATERNAL, NEW BORN HEALTH, HIV AND TB  
PROGRAMME 2022-2027**

**East African Community Headquarters, Arusha, Tanzania, 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 2022:** The EAC Integrated Health Programme (EIHP) has successfully institutionalised accountability mechanisms for health programmes, and facilitated availability of updated and credible information for health projects in the region, as well as developed key strategic and policy documents to guide integration and cooperation in health.

Speaking during the 5<sup>th</sup> Joint Steering Committee Meeting for the EIHP, EAC Deputy Secretary General in charge of Productive and Social Sectors, Hon. Christophe Bazivamo, noted that the EAC had successfully developed the EAC Comprehensive Regional Integrated Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal, New Born Health, HIV and TB Programme 2022-2027. “This document offers a regional framework that paves way for continued cooperation on the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and HIV agenda within the Integrated Health Programme”, said Hon. Bazivamo.

The Deputy Secretary General further noted that the EIHP has also developed a draft EAC Regional Minimum Package on Integration of Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH)/HIV Services as well as drafted a Regional Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) study report that will ultimately inform the harmonization in STI management within the EAC Partner States.

“The EAC Integrated Health Programme continues to advocate for the institutionalization of accountability mechanisms such as the EAC Integrated RMNCAH, HIV/AIDS, and Tuberculosis (TB) Scorecard,” he added.

Noting that the EAC, just like the rest of the world, has seen major disruptions in nearly all sectors due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Hon. Bazivamo noted that regional integration activities and initiatives that require regular face to face interaction with the aim of building consensus in line with the EAC Treaty, have been severely affected. He further noted that this had led to major delays, which have in turn affected various project and programme implementation deadlines/targets. However, he noted that since the COVID-19 outbreak, the EAC Secretariat in collaboration with the Partner States have put in place mechanisms to counter the spread of the pandemic and mitigate its socio-economic impact.

On her part, Deputy Head of Sweden's Regional SRHR Team for Africa, Ms. Mikaela Hildebrand, hailed the partnership between the EAC and the Government of Sweden, and reaffirmed the commitment by the Government of Sweden in supporting various initiatives in the EAC region.

"Sweden has been a long-term partner to the EAC, as we recognise the importance of working with African regional platforms such as RECs which, among other things, embody cooperation and regional strengths, enabling countries to tackle challenges that no-one country can manage on its own, as well as also representing important platforms for sharing experience, best practice and even for accountability", said Ms. Hildebrand.

Ms. Hildebrand stated that she was inspired by how, despite the continuing challenges occasioned by the pandemic, the EAC Secretariat and the EAC Partner States have continued to work hard, looking at how to use the COVID-19 pandemic to build back better, more resilient health systems, as well as scaling up innovative solutions, and other e-health solutions to scale up access to quality health services.

The overall objective of the 5th Joint Steering Committee Meeting was to review the progress status of implementation of activities under the EAC Integrated Health Programme (EIHP) and deliberation on the implementation of the EAC Comprehensive Regional Integrated Sexual Reproductive, Maternal, New Born Health, HIV and TB Programme (2022-2027). The meeting also presented a platform to build consensus on the plan for Phase II of the EIHP programme.

The meeting was also attended by First Secretary/Regional Advisor, Embassy of Sweden Lusaka/Regional SRHR Team, Mr. John Viner; Programme Specialist SRH/HIV, UNFPA, East and Southern Africa Regional Office, Mr. Richard Delate; and Business Development Associate, East Africa Health Platform, Mr. Andrew Msami.

The Joint Steering Committee Meeting is an annual meeting during which the EAC Integrated Health Programme (EIHP), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and key stakeholders take stock of the programme's performance.

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