



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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AFRICA UNITES AGAINST BRAIN- DRAIN IN HEALTH

African Ministers of Health currently attending the World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva (May 16-25) have spoken with one voice in expressing their concerns about the continued migration and recruitment of health personnel from developing to developed countries.

The African Ministers gave full support to the resolution drafted by South Africa for adoption by the WHA highlighting the international migration and recruitment particularly of skilled and experienced health professionals as a major challenge for health systems in developing countries.

The resolution calls upon the Director General of the World Health Organisation (WHO) to ensure that the previous decision of the WHA aimed at addressing this matter is fully implemented. This includes strengthening of the Human Resources for Health division in the WHO by allocating adequate financial and resources to enable the division to effectively execute the necessary actions aimed at addressing this matter. The Ministers are concerned that international migration and recruitment of personnel undermines the main investment that most African countries have made in improving their health services and further weakens the health systems in the continent.



Human resources for health is expected to be the main subject for the World Health Report to be released by the WHO early next year and will be the theme for next years' World Health Day. Focus of human resource should create an opportunity for developing countries to put the issues of international migration and recruitment of health personnel high on the world health agenda.

Minister of Health, Dr Manto Tshabalala-Msimang said South Africa would continue to seek global solutions to this international phenomenon affecting almost every developing country particularly in Africa. Minister Tshabalala-Msimang is leading high level South African delegation to the WHA, which includes Free State Health MEC Mr Sakhiwo Balot and KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC, Ms Peggy Nkonyeni and other senior officials of the Department of Health.

“Human resource planning is critical in our ability to intervene against diseases and promote good health. We need to ensure that international migration and recruitment of health personnel does not undercut our national plan to improve human resource supply and distribution. This is a critical element of our endeavour to strengthen our health system and provide quality health services,” said Minister Tshabalala-Msimang.

Addressing international migration and recruitment of health personnel is one of several interventions that the Department of Health is making to address the challenges of human resource supply and distribution in South Africa. Other interventions involve improving working conditions for health workers and providing scarce skills and rural allowances to attract and retain health workers in the public health sector in general and rural or underserved areas in particular.

Note: After full endorsement by African Health Ministers, South Africa's resolution is to be tabled before the full meeting of the WHA for adoption.

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