

Secretary-General's Statement on the Signing of the Headquarters Country Partnership Agreement for D-8 Health and Social Protection Programme Office

Protocols,

On behalf of the D-8 Secretariat, I wish to convey our profound gratitude to the Government and good people of Nigeria for the unflinching support to the ideals and visions of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation. I particularly delighted to be visiting Abuja after a similar visit about a year ago, and will like to use this medium to congratulate Hon'ble Minister of State on your appointment.

Today's event is historic as it marks a watershed in the history of our Organization being the broadening of our operational mandate into health and social protection. The D-8 journey that started over 20 years ago has led to quite some modest achievements. Economic cooperation between Member Countries across several sectors such as trade, aviation, infrastructure, tourism and culture, transportation, agriculture, education, electronics and ICT has improved and yielded some good dividends to Member Countries and the entire D-8 Organization. Our objective to be counted and seen visibly as a giant group in the international arena is gradually seeing the light of the day so also is our voice, which is now standards of our population needs to be worked on more vigorously in order to attain the right momentum for huge socio-economic growth to occur.

In this regard, the launching of the D-8 Health and Social Protection (HSP) programme is designed to accelerate progress especially in the context of SDGs 1, 2, and 3 which are critical indicators of living standards. I am happy to note that the health and social protection programme has been structured in such a manner that resources will be leveraged from within the group, the strong supporting the weak thereby reducing reliance on donor aid.

It is pertinent to state that a central pillar in this programme is aligned to trade, which is a paradigm shift from aid dependency to trade. The HSP programme hopes to unlock the market potential in health amongst Member Countries from which resources will be leveraged to fund the key intervention pillars of health, nutrition and poverty namely; Access to essential health services, improving the quality of care, governance and human resource for health, preventing non communicable diseases and providing social protection. Furthermore, the programme hopes to use innovative financing tools and mechanisms to generate enough domestic resources to fund these interventions.

It is therefore my immense pleasure to note the huge sacrifice and contributions of the Government of Nigeria as the host of the health and social protection programme, particularly, the funding for the start up of the office as provided in 2020 appropriation. We at the D-8 Secretariat are very excited and hopeful that this contribution when supplemented by membership contribution and innovative resource mobilization that will be embarked upon will go a long way in properly positioning the health and social protection programme in the Global Public Health space. Already under the able leadership of the Programme Director, Dr. Ado Muhammad the team has initiated strategic alliances with IsDB, Chatham House, Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria, WHO, Zenith Bank, Jaiz Bank etc. that will get the programme off ground quickly on signing the country partnership agreement. Thus, today's signing of a country partnership agreement seals the deal. Once more, we thank Nigeria for making this possible in such a short period of time.

Congratulations and God bless Nigeria.