

COMMUNIQUE

Issued at the Close of the Culture of Science Conference 2026

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The Coalition for Health Research and Development (CHReaD), convened the Culture of Science Conference 2026 in partnership with Speak Up Africa, Africa Health Research, Innovation and Development Alliance (AHRIDA) and Faith to Action Network, from 8 to 10 September 2026 at the Ole Sereni Hotel, Nairobi. Under the theme “Shaping Africa’s Future through Science,” the Conference brought together policymakers, researchers, financiers, regulators, innovators, educators, media practitioners, and civil society actors from across the continent.

African governments invest an average of 0.5 percent of GDP in research and development, against the 1 percent target set by the African Union’s Algiers Declaration. Only three countries currently meet the Abuja Declaration’s commitment of allocating 15 percent of national budgets to health. The African Medicines Agency is now working toward harmonized regulatory review across the continent’s Regional Economic Communities. These figures describe a lived constraint on what Africans can research, manufacture, regulate, and trust, not a distant policy gap.

Across three thematic days, financing and governing science, executing and innovating science, and embedding and sustaining science, the Conference examined the mechanisms required to close this gap and called for ring fenced domestic research budget lines, accelerated regulatory harmonization under the African Medicines Agency and AfCFTA, and expanded local manufacturing of medicines and diagnostics. Parallel sessions carried this same inquiry into education and the future health workforce, artificial intelligence in healthcare, genomics, traditional and alternative medicine, and the leadership of women and youth in shaping the continent’s science agenda.

Throughout, the Conference affirmed that science in Africa is not a distant technical enterprise but a public good, a cultural practice, and a determinant of sovereignty, embedded in how the continent governs, invests, communicates, and trusts.

On financing, the Action Agenda calls for renewed progress towards Africa’s continental aspiration of allocating 1 percent of GDP to research and development, supported by ring-fenced domestic R&D budget lines. It also calls for increased domestic investment in health research and development, alongside renewed progress towards the Abuja Declaration commitment to allocate at least 15 percent of national budgets to health.

On regulation, the Action Agenda calls for AU Member States and the African Medicines Agency to advance operational integration of harmonized regulatory standards across all Regional Economic Communities by 2030, and calls for functional National Regulatory Authorities in all 55 AU Member States, with at least 10 reaching WHO Maturity Level 3.

On research, innovation, and access, the Action Agenda commits manufacturers, regional institutions, and national procurement authorities to work toward local production meeting 50 percent of Africa's pharmaceutical needs and 25 percent local procurement of priority diagnostics and devices by 2030, alongside sustained expansion of the continent's research workforce toward internationally recognized researcher density benchmarks.

On public trust, the Conference calls for sustained investment in science communication, journalism, and public engagement that continues beyond the conference cycle, carried forward through CHReaD's ongoing media and journalist engagement work.

The CHReaD Secretariat will publish the culture of science roadmap and an annual implementation update tracking progress against the 2026 baseline, with formal review by the CHReaD Steering Committee ahead of the 2028 mid term review and the 2030 final review.

On behalf of the CHReaD Steering Committee,

Mary Muia

Chair, CHReaD Steering Committee