

The African Union and the European Union Commission have launched three agreements worth €100 million aimed at strengthening public health systems across Africa, focusing on disease surveillance, emergency response and pandemic preparedness.

The initiatives were formally unveiled Tuesday at the African Union headquarters by Jozef Síkela and Jean Kaseya, the operational partner for the programs through the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

The first program will support national public health institutes in 10 African countries to strengthen disease surveillance systems, early warning mechanisms, laboratory services, research capacity and emergency response coordination.

A second initiative, announced during the One Health Summit in León earlier this month, focuses on combating antimicrobial resistance and building a workforce trained under a “One Health” approach that integrates human, animal and environmental health.

The third project aims to expand digital health tools to improve pandemic preparedness and strengthen primary healthcare systems in six African countries.

Speaking at the launch, Síkela said the European Union remains committed to global health cooperation despite geopolitical challenges.

“Health remains at the top of the EU’s political agenda,” he said. “While others are stepping away, we are stepping up.”

He said recent global health crises have shown that outbreaks in one region can quickly become global threats. “Investing in global health is a strategic investment, not a gesture,” he said.

Kaseya said the initiatives support Africa’s broader health security and sovereignty goals by strengthening the continent’s ability to prevent, finance and manage its own health priorities.

Ethiopian Health Minister Mekdes Daba welcomed the programs, citing lessons from recent outbreaks including COVID-19, mpox and Marburg disease.

“A crisis in one region can, with alarming speed, become a challenge for the continent and the world,” she said. “Preparedness cannot be deferred.”

Officials said the EU and AU are also preparing a broader global health resilience initiative expected to be launched in May, aimed at improving cooperation in research, medical technology, workforce training and local vaccine and medicine production.