

Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) Commemorates United Nations World Health Day, 2025.



The Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) commemorated the annual United Nations World Health Day on April 15th 2025 with the theme: “Advancing Healthcare Access through Innovation and Collaboration.”

The event kicked off with free medical care for members of staff. Distinguished speakers and guests included Pharm. Khadijah Ade-Abolade, Director of Vaccines, Biologics & Medical Devices Registration & Regulatory Affairs Directorate, NAFDAC who ably represented the Director- General of NAFDAC, Prof Mojisola C. Adeyeye, as the keynote speaker. She was accompanied by Bolade Ikuagba, Chief Regulatory Officer, NAFDAC, Dr. Adewura Kazeem, Senior Registrar, Orthopaedic Surgery and Trauma, LASUTH and Aina Olugbenga Stephen, Chairman, Nigerian Institute of Food Science and Technology, Lagos.

In his opening remarks, the Director- General of the NIIA, Prof Eghosa Osaghae, who was represented by the Director of Research, NIIA, Assoc. Prof Joshua Bolarinwa, recounted that the commemoration of the annual United Nations World Health Day aligns with the statutory mandate of the NIIA.

Prof. Femi Otubanjo, Research Professor at the NIIA, who was the Chairman of the event emphasized that health is of paramount importance regardless of one's position in life. He stressed that health should be considered a critical item that deserves top priority in the national budget, second only to national security. He further noted that the event is strategic in helping Nigeria overcome its health deficits.

Pharm. Khadijah Ade-Abolade, in the keynote address, shared her perspective on advancing health care access through innovation and collaboration. She emphasized that timely access to personalized health services is essential for achieving optimal health outcomes. She further said that the existing framework of access to healthcare especially in Low and Middle Income Countries (LMIC) settings encompasses five dimensions: availability, accessibility, affordability, adequacy, and acceptability. The effectiveness of accessed healthcare is measured by the likelihood of a positive outcome. Ade –Bolade proposed an expansion of the framework of access to health care to include an additional dimension of the quality of healthcare products. This critically influences the ability of the accessed services to generate optimal health outcomes. The quality of health care dimension includes, but is not limited to quality of medicines, vaccines and diagnostics as well as quality of food consumed.

She further stated that a robust regulatory framework is necessary to ensure the safety, effectiveness and availability of healthcare products, as well as wholesome food. When regulatory systems function properly, both patients and health systems benefit from rapid and sustained access to high-quality, safe, and effective products. A stable and well-functioning regulatory system is therefore essential. Such regulatory systems should be resilient and innovative in responding to situations requiring regulatory decision making to safeguard public health. In rounding off, she stated that the World Health Organization (WHO) declared NAFDAC as a Maturity Level 3 (ISO 9004-2018) Regulatory Agency on March 30, 2022.

Dr. Adewura Kazeem focused on primary health care sustainability in Nigeria. She explained that Primary Health Care (PHC) encompasses basic health services accessible to all members of society regardless of socio-economic status. Primary health care serves as the foundation of an effective health system and represents the first point of contact for most Nigerians. Sustainability in this context ensures long-term accessibility, affordability, and resilience of these services.

Dr. Kazeem identified several major challenges facing Nigerian primary health care, which includes funding deficits below the Abuja Declarations of 15% recommendation, workforce shortage, inadequate professionals and brain drain, infrastructure gaps, insufficient electricity, water, and equipment among others. She highlighted strategic opportunities for Nigeria to address its public health challenges through increased investments, human resource development, training, incentives, technology integration, E-health and telemedicine solutions, Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and community participation, strengthening health facilities committees.

She concluded with recommendations for improving Nigeria's public health system through consistent funding, resource allocation, strengthened governance and enhanced accountability. She also advocated for expanded rural outreach, workforce training increased public awareness, community trust-building and leveraging technology to implement best practices.

The event ended with a vote of thanks given by Dr. Nicholas Erameh, Senior Research Fellow, and Head, Division of International Politics, NIIA, on behalf of the institute.

Report Compiled by NIIA Programme Reporting Committee.