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World Health Day: Together for health. Stand with science

Every year on April 7, the global community pauses to reflect on our shared responsibility for promoting and protecting health. This year's World Health Day theme—"Together for health. Stand with science."—could not be more timely or more urgent. It reminds us that the greatest health challenges of our generation cannot be solved in isolation. The theme captures three important parts of global and Ugandan health as a collective responsibility, science-driven action, and a one health approach, linking human health, animal health and environmental sustainability together.

As an ambassador, I have the privilege of seeing first-hand how interconnected our world truly is. Health does not stop at borders. The focus on collective responsibility resonates even more powerful in Uganda's current moment. Major donors, both global funds and bilateral donors, are forced to scale back funding due to shifting global priorities.

The full extent of the impact is only becoming clear on a day-to-day basis. While the ministries of Finance and Health are undertaking the tremendous task of keeping track of evolving donor contributions, the Auditor General's 2026 report already warned Uganda that the country will lose \$312.8 million (about Shs1.2 trillion) in development-partner budget support from FY2025/26 onwards. As external financing declines, Uganda's health sector will increasingly depend on more targeted and efficient public investment to maximise impact, prioritising high-burden areas and essential services.

In a joint Team Europe effort, the European Union, Belgium and many of our fellow EU member states are continuing to support Uganda and global health systems. This support comes through many ways: providing funds to the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria or the Vaccine Alliance, the African Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Bank, NGO's and

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Hugues Chantry
World Health Day



UN agencies who in their turn support the Ministry of Health to implement its health strategic plan to the best of their abilities.

As Belgium, we are grateful for the excellent collaboration between Belgium's implementing agency Enabel and the Ministry of Health, district officials and health centres, in addressing the three delays preventing health care: the delay in the decision to seek care (the first delay); the delay in reaching health care (the second delay); and the delay in receiving adequate health care (the third delay). We work with the Belgian Red Cross to strengthen the functioning of the Ugandan Red Cross services; with humanity and inclusion to foster a nurturing care environment for children with disabilities and with Veterinarians Without Borders on the One Health approach, reflected in the theme of this year's World Health Day. Many EU member states support similar initiatives, seeking to secure the quality and continuity of care that Ugandan communities deserve.

As our fellow EU member states however, we encounter structural obstacles that limit the success of our joint health programmes. Public spending in Uganda's health sector remains insufficient, which directly affects our ability to implement sustainable interventions. Health is not only a social priority but a fundamental driver of economic growth—just as education is—forming the

foundation of Uganda's human capital and its ambition for accelerated national development.

In this spirit of shared responsibility, we urge the Government of Uganda to take concrete steps to protect investments in human resources for health, ensure reliable electricity supply for all health facilities, strengthen and adequately fund the health workforce—particularly in refugee-hosting districts, address absenteeism through stronger accountability mechanisms and uphold free access to essential and emergency health services for every Ugandan. Strengthening accountability at all levels, from communities to health facilities, will be essential to ensure that services are responsive, reliable, and trusted by the people they serve.

As EU member states, and as Belgium, we are committed to taking our responsibility seriously. Together for health is not just a slogan for us; it is a principle we put into practice through long-standing support to Uganda's health sector. But partnership requires mutual effort.

We call upon the Government of Uganda to match this commitment from donors and the Ugandan population. Belgium and our EU colleagues hold a clear accountability to our taxpayers in Belgium and the entire European Union, to ensure that the resources we invest deliver real and measurable results for the people of Uganda.

We also call upon you, the people of Uganda, to seek assistance from health services, to trust evidence-based medical interventions and to encourage and facilitate mothers to reach and deliver in health facilities.

Uganda is entering a new era. The path ahead demands responsible leadership, evidence-based planning, and shared commitment at every level. If Uganda stands with science, and stands together—government, partners, civil society, and communities—then even in a time of shrinking donor resources, the country can build a health system that is resilient, sustainable, and worthy of every Ugandan life.

H.E. Hugues Chantry,
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