

# EAC summit to discuss health sector standards

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Having uniform health sector standards will top the 2018 East African Community (EAC) heads of state summit, Julius Maganda, the state minister for East African Affairs, has said.

"We want to create a programme and a budget to finance the development of the health sector, so that we have the same level of development across the region. So diseases that would warrant a patient to be transferred to Nairobi, Dar es salam or Aga khan hospitals should be treated within the home country," he said on Thursday while addressing journalists in Kampala.

The summit, which will take place on February 23 at Munyonyo Speke Resort Hotel, will have two heads-of-state retreats, of which one will focus on investment in health.

## Funding

Maganda said that during the health retreat, heads of state will build consensus on regional health sector investment priorities for the attainment of universal health coverage and sustainable development goals.

He said focus will also be put on financing of the health sector and member states will be required to come up with financing options they can exploit.

"Heads of state will discuss the funding mechanism for the sector. The sector will also generate projects that will attract funding from the region, or partner states to come up with options that will generate the funding from the development partners



**Julius Maganda**

or directly from budgets," he added.

Maganda, who is also the Samia-Bugwe south legislator, said the reason why the 17th EAC summit will focus on financing the sector is because of the dire need to improve the health sector, so that the countries have the same level of development.

He said the region is developing projections on what it wants achieved within the health sector and Uganda has to implement it to match and get to the level where the other partner states are.

## Budget pledge

He dispelled claims that Uganda is being overly ambitious on this scheme on grounds that the country has failed to meet the health target under the Abuja declaration, saying it is a regional requirement that they will have to meet.

In April 2001, African Union countries

met and pledged to set a target of allocating at least 15% of their annual budget to improve the health sector. However, Uganda has failed to meet the target so far.

Maganda said that they are looking at securing funds through the private sector and will also mobilise resources within the country's budget.

When contacted, Dr Diana Atwine, the health ministry permanent secretary, said this has been long overdue, saying when harmonisation is done in the sector, people will be able to move freely and work anywhere they want since the system will be the same.

She said the only disadvantage will be on the implementation since countries such as South Sudan are just joining the EAC.

## On the agenda

The summit will also discuss progress on political federation, roadmap for the accelerated integration of South Sudan, review the textile and leather sector and discuss the progress of the verification exercise for the admission of Somalia into the EAC.

It will also discuss the modalities for promotion of motor vehicle assembly in the community and the one network area framework.

It will be held under the theme *Enhancing socio-economic development for deeper integration of the community* and will be graced by ministers, technocrats, researchers, civil society organisations, private sector, academia and youth within the community.