Recap of the 78th World Health Assembly

At the 78th World Health Assembly, where our champion, Dr. Kaberuka, proudly represented AHFIA, the central theme was a resounding call for stronger domestic leadership in African health financing.

The Assembly emphasized the urgent need for African countries and institutions, such as the Africa CDC and the African Union Commission, to each play distinct and complementary roles in addressing the continent's health financing crisis shaped by a trilemma of rapid population growth that demands greater investment in social services, shrinking fiscal space, and waning global solidarity.

From the discussions, African institutions and governments must take the lead in shaping policy and regulatory agendas, particularly in critical areas such as sustainability and digital innovation. The path forward requires countries to take ownership of the transition from aid dependency to sustainable self-reliance and to implement results-based reforms that move beyond rhetoric to tangible impact.

Three key strategies emerged for achieving this vision:

1. **Prioritizing Domestic Investment**:
   African leaders are committing to investing more domestic resources in health, even amid fiscal constraints. This includes leveraging matching funds from philanthropies and non-traditional donors, and—crucially—recognizing health as a central pillar of national development rather than a peripheral concern. Many ministers voiced their determination to leave behind the era of aid dependency.

2. **Deploying Innovative Financing Tools**:

a) Tax Reforms: Introducing new health taxes, increasing property taxes, and eliminating tax exemptions for wealthy individuals and multinational corporations to broaden the domestic resource base.

b) Efficient Public Financial Management: Improving procurement systems, implementing smart spending practices, and reforming national health insurance, including community-based models, to ensure resources are used effectively and reach those most in need.

3. **Harnessing Data for Decision-Making**:
   Leaders emphasized the importance of robust data systems to inform policy and investment. This supports a shift from disease-centered approaches to client-centered care, enabling health services to be tailored to the holistic needs of individuals and communities.

In summary, African countries must reclaim ownership of the health financing narrative and strategy. This means challenging outdated international assumptions, making bold domestic policy choices, and recognizing that investing in health is fundamental to long-term economic transformation. The World Health Assembly made clear that the future of African health systems depends on courageous leadership, innovative financing, and a relentless focus on results.