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PRESS RELEASE:

**CANCER CIVIL SOCIETY RESPONSE TO THE CATHOLIC DOCTORS STATEMENT ON HPV VACCINATION FOR CERVICAL CANCER.**

Nairobi, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2019

Nearly 5000 Kenyan women are diagnosed with cervical cancer every year. Half of them die of the disease. The Kenya Catholic Doctors Association reveal a deliberate distortion of facts and ignorance of the reality of cancer in our country where 90 Kenyans die every day from different cancers - cervical, oesophageal, prostate, Colorectal, breast among others. We now have scientific evidence that nearly a third of cancers including cervical cancer can be prevented. Therefore the statement by the said doctors on the planned national roll out of HPV vaccinations in Kenya is grossly inaccurate, misleading and irresponsible.

The use of pseudoscience and unsubstantiated statements by these doctors to fuel fear is particularly disturbing. For instance they assert that the vaccine increases the risk of developing cancer without providing evidence yet there is sound scientific evidence that the vaccine actually prevents development of cervical cancer. They further claim that the vaccine has not been proven effective. Nothing could be further from the truth. Rigorous clinical trials and more than 10 years' experience of vaccine use in such diverse places - from Australia to Scotland have demonstrated the effectiveness of the vaccine against the HPV virus responsible for majority of the cervical cancers.

According to David Makumi, the outgoing chairman of the Kenyan Network of Cancer Organizations (KENCO), "The catholic doctors should have engaged their professional colleagues and experts in vaccines and seek clarifications from the Ministry of Health instead of making such unfortunate statement laden with scientific inaccuracies and sensational half-truths."

The cancer control community in Kenya is determined to fight cancer with scientific evidence-based modalities and is willing and ready to work with professional associations, religious leaders and faith based organizations.

The Kenyan Network of Cancer Organizations is therefore calling on all Kenyans to treat this irresponsible statement by catholic doctors with the contempt it deserves.

Let us join hands to protect the daughters and sons of this country.

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**Notes for Editors.**

*The Kenyan Network of Cancer Organizations is the national umbrella body of cancer NGOs, CBOs and patient support groups with over 30 member organizations. [www.kenconetwork.org](http://www.kenconetwork.org) KMA Plaza Suite 1.1 Block E.*

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