



MINISTRY OF HEALTH

STATEMENT BY THE CABINET SECRETARY FOR HEALTH ON LICENSING OF FOREIGN HEALTH PRACTITIONERS

7th JANUARY 2026

1. The Ministry of Health wishes to clarify that Kenya will **prioritize the licensing and deployment of qualified Kenyan health practitioners** before considering the routine licensing of foreign doctors and other health professionals. The Government has invested substantial public resources—drawn from Kenyan taxpayers—into training doctors, nurses, clinical officers and specialists at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. It is therefore both prudent and just that Kenyans trained using public resources are given first priority to serve our country.
2. This position is firmly grounded in **international best practice**. Global bodies such as the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** and the **World Health Organization (WHO)** consistently affirm the principle that countries should prioritise employment opportunities for their own qualified health workforce as part of national workforce planning, sustainability, and health system resilience. No country world over has developed a sustainable health system with foreign health workforce
3. The Ministry wishes to emphasise that this policy **does not apply to countries within the East African Community (EAC) region**. Kenya remains fully committed to regional integration and continues to honour **reciprocal recognition agreements** within the EAC framework, which allows for mutual recognition of qualifications and regulated professional mobility among Partner States.
4. At the same time, the Ministry will continue to exercise discretion by **reviewing applications for foreign practitioners on a case-by-case basis**, strictly guided by national interest. Priority will only be given where there is a **demonstrable skills gap**—particularly in highly specialised or emerging fields where local capacity is not yet available or sub-optimal—

and where such engagement supports local knowledge transfer and system strengthening.

5. This approach is **neither isolationist nor unique to Kenya**. Many countries—including high-income nations—apply similar policies that prioritise local professionals while allowing carefully regulated entry of foreign practitioners in exceptional circumstances. This is recognised internationally as a legitimate sovereign function of health workforce regulation.
6. The policy also responds to a critical regulatory concern. The Ministry has observed cases where individuals seek registration to practise in Kenya **despite lacking recognition, good standing, or licensure in their countries of origin**. International regulatory norms, including guidance from WHO and global professional councils, require host countries to safeguard patient safety by preventing such practices and curbing professional misconduct.
7. As the custodian of Kenya's health security, the Ministry will continue to work through statutory regulatory bodies to ensure that **licensing decisions uphold patient safety, professional integrity, and national workforce sustainability**, while remaining compliant with Kenyan law and international obligations.
8. Kenya's position is clear, lawful, and globally aligned: **qualified Kenyans must come first**, regional commitments will be respected, and exceptional foreign engagement will be permitted only where it adds clear value to the health system and meets the highest ethical and professional standards.



Hon. Aden Duale, EGH
CABINET SECRETARY