

Welcome remarks by the ACP Secretary General at the World Malaria Day event on 20 April 2015, Brussels

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Delivered on behalf of the Secretary General by the Expert in Charge of Health, Education, Science & Technology Dr. John Kakule, at the World Malaria Day commemoration at ACP House, organised in collaboration with the Malaria Consortium, Roll Back Malaria Partnership and the PATH Malaria Vaccine Initiative.

I wish to welcome you all at this World Malaria Day 2015 Event, co-organised by the ACP Secretariat, Roll Back Malaria Partnership, Malaria Consortium and the Malaria Vaccine Initiative (MVI), to reflect on the fight against malaria in endemic countries. On 25 April 2015, the global community will once again mark the World Malaria Day with an assessment of the progress made against malaria as well as looking at the challenges towards eliminating this disease.

It is well established that Malaria is preventable and treatable, but still kills more than 580, 000 people each year, despite the current advances in medicines and technology. As rightly underlined by some "for those populations in malaria endemic countries, every day is malaria day". 90% of all malaria deaths occur in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in some of the poorest countries in world, and 78% of people killed are children under-five years old. It is thus important for the global community to mark a Malaria Day, as a reminder of these statistics related to this killer disease and the need to address them.

It is therefore once again an appropriate opportunity:

- for countries in the affected regions to learn from each other's experiences and support each other's efforts;
- for new donors to join a global partnership against malaria;
- for research and academic institutions to flag their advances to both experts and general public; and
- for international partners, companies and foundations to showcase their efforts and reflect on how to scale up what has worked.

Thanks for an increased funding and scaling up of malaria prevention and control interventions since 2000, we have seen remarkable progress for combating malaria around the world. In 2013, 160 million rapid diagnostic tests (RDTs) were delivered, up from fewer than 200,000 in 2005. 83% of these were delivered to countries in Africa. In 2013, 392 million artemisinin combination therapies (ACTs) malaria treatments were delivered, and in the same year, almost half of the population at risk in Sub-Saharan Africa had access to an insecticide-treated mosquito net (ITN) in their household, compared to 3% in 2004. As such since 2000, the number of malaria deaths have fallen by an estimated 47 % worldwide and by 54% in Africa. This amounts to 670 million fewer cases and 4.3 million fewer deaths.

However, numerous challenges remain in eliminating the malaria disease, these include:

- Resistance to our most effective antimalarials, ACTs, is expanding in the Greater Mekong Subregion of South East Asia, and if drug resistance malaria reached India and Africa, the impact could be devastating and could lead to a huge resurgence in deaths.
- Resistance is also growing to the insecticides used in mosquito nets, threatening one of the most important preventive tools in malaria control.
- There is a significant gap between the total funding available for malaria control and elimination each year (\$2.7 billion in 2013) and what the WHO estimates is required to achieve global targets for malaria elimination (\$5.1 billion).
- Weak health systems undermine the sustainability of progress in tackling malaria, and are unable to cope with crises such as the Ebola outbreak in West Africa.

It is in this vein that the ACP Group of States encourages the effective prevention and control of malaria as one of the milestones in availing quality health care for populations in malaria endemic countries, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa. The complex nature and processes of the spread and transmission of malaria and other communicable diseases necessitate highly efficient national health care systems and effective global partnerships.

It is also important to integrate in the national health development programmes, multi-sectoral and inter-disciplinary interventions that constantly employ new understandings and technologies in treatment, vaccination, vector control, and research, aimed at the prevention and control of communicable diseases, such as malaria.

We recognize that despite the tremendous efforts being done by the global research and development community to get anti-malarial medicines to the people who need them most, the malaria parasite continues to be virulent. This therefore underlines the need for enhanced research efforts to find new ways to combat malaria and eliminate the disease.

Further, good nutrition, access to safe water and adequate sanitation are essential in ensuring quality primary health-care to populations, and should depend on knowledge of a range of factors affecting the concerned communities. These may include social, cultural and economic factors.

We recognize that the global partnership has made huge investments in malaria control in the past years and the gains achieved in this fight must be sustained. We should also remember that malaria is still a number one killer of children under 5 in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is thus imperative that malaria endemic ACP States treat malaria prevention and control efforts as investments for sustainable development. To this end, policy-makers in the affected ACP States need to ensure that adequate financial provisions are allocated in the national budgets for the health sector.

In conclusion, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, be assured that the ACP Secretariat is committed to support the global partnership on malaria prevention and control. Through the Cotonou Partnership Agreement, the Secretariat will continue to address the challenges to the provision of quality health care in ACP Member States, in pursuit of achieving Universal Health Coverage in the context of the post-2015 Development Agenda. I therefore wish you fruitful deliberations.

I thank you for your kind attention.

Dr Patrick I. Gomes
ACP Secretary General

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