18th Session of the Joint Action Forum

Host town : Bujumbura today

Welcome to Bujumbura! Welcome to the 18th Joint Action Forum. It is a pleasure for me to extend my greetings to you on the occasion of this great forum on Onchocerciasis control organized yearly by a partner in collaboration with APOC.

This 18th session that takes place in the Burundian capital offers me the opportunity to express my entire gratitude to His Excellency The President of the Republic and the Government of Burundi for freely offering a comfortable and beautiful space for this workshop. I thank the people of Burundi for their warm welcome and hospitality.

I would also like to thank the Ministers, head of delegations and all Program actors and partners, for your trip to Bujumbura despite busy schedule and many responsibilities. Your presence here is a clear proof of your commitment to eradicate this scourge that considerably concerns you.

I presume the exposés and the discussions that constitute the base of the workshop will be constructive as obvious, and will lead to important and encouraging decisions for the smooth functioning of APOC.

Finally, I wish that the world most appreciated partnership which strengthened our support to the suffering alleviation of thousands of onchocerciasis infected persons and to the amelioration of their economic and social well-being, inspire all of us for the smooth conducting of this workshop.

Happy forum to all.

Dr Luis G. Sambo

Provisional Agenda – Day 2 – Wednesday 12 December 2012

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Day II program and useful information

Today, the 500,000 Bujumbura inhabitants (according to the 2010 general population census) occupy over 85km² in 13 urban councils. Dynamic, they excel in wholesale and retail, especially at the central market, leading to constant commercial exchanges and will lead to important and encouraging decisions for the smooth functioning of APOC.

Finally, I wish that the world most appreciated partnership which strengthened our support to the suffering alleviation of thousands of onchocerciasis infected persons and to the amelioration of their economic and social well-being, inspire all of us for the smooth conducting of this workshop.

Happy forum to all.

Dr LUIS G. SAMBO
The Joint Action Forum: a great symbol
The Joint Action Forum is not only the managerial instance where big decisions for the functioning of African Program for Onchocerciasis Control (APOC) are taken after a critical look on operations and budget, but it is also a constructive working environment for the reinforcement relation between national and international partners, thus making the model the best in the world.

The health preservation of 120 million people threatened by onchocerciasis in Africa will be discussed in Bujumbura, Burundi from 11 to 13 December, 2012.

At the moment when the endemic African governments, bilateral and multilateral organisms, foundations, nongovernmental development organizations, affected communities delegates, scientific community and the private sector are about to tackle component by component, actions that will safeguard the affected communities delegates, scientific community and the private sector.

APOC relies on partnership among endemic communities, NGDO, donors and endemic country governments. These partnership frameworks between parties discussed the various strategic approaches to be implemented to the control/elimination of onchocerciasis and other NTDs.

During the period, a total of 120 CDTI projects/programs and six NOTF received assistance from the APOC Trust Fund for the implementation of onchocerciasis control and elimination actions.

Advocacy was mostly developed in post-conflict country in order to guarantee and to increase the political and financial support in favor of the program. In South Sudan, the management of APOC went to encourage the necessity of the re-launching of CDTI activities, a situation revealed by the situation analysis. In DRC and CAR, the advocacy in which were implicated high level representatives, focused on the integration of the gender aspect in CDTI activities.

Editorial of Dr Paul Samson Lusamba-Dikassa, Director of APOC

The main activities of the fight against onchocerciasis in 2012
During its 17th session held in Kuwait, the Joint Action Forum instructed the program to focus on (i) elimination on onchocerciasis in Africa, (ii) the reinforcement of community health system and (III) a jointly implemented strategic plan principally lies on the elimination of onchocerciasis through the community directed ivermectine treatment. Already in 2011, more than 80 million people were treated in 16 countries. Moreover, the community directed distributors network reached 60 million people for other health intervention.

The reinforcement of community health systems focused on the training of more than 83,000 health agents at different level of the sanitary pyramid. These trainings covers various domains such as community directed interventions, financial management, public health, epidemiology and entomology. Concerning the latest, for 2012, eight new scholarships were granted for master’s studies.

The fight against onchocerciasis and NTD in Burundi: there is hope
It is in 1950 that first cases of onchocerciasis were signaled in Burundi, especially on leprosy suspected patients. The presence of the illness is confirmed by studies conducted in 1979 and years forward. It appears that the vector is simillium kilibanum, belonging to simillium damnosum group.

Over the years, Burundi undertook some actions to fight the illness through the creation of appropriate structures, notably MAPR (Rusizi Plain Development Mission) in 1960, LMTC project (Transmissible and deficiency diseases control) in 1985, PNLO (National program for Onchocerciasis Control) in 2005, NTD project in 2007 and the merging of the two latest projects that became PNIMTNC (National integrated program NTD and blindness control) since 2010.

Four questions to Dr Onesime Ndayishimiye, Director of PNIMTNC Burundi
What explained the merging of NTD and PNLO projects in 2010?
Onchocerciasis being a neglected tropical disease and taking into consideration the efficient strategy developed by CDTI, we thought that this method was the best to fight other NTD in a combined and single project.

You are coordinating the fight against NTD since 2007. After these years, what do you think of the epidemiological situation of these illnesses?
I think the trend is good. Concerning onchocerciasis, I could say we will soon pass from control to its elimination. In the same light, the prevalence of schistosomiasis at the national level has dropped from 26% in 2007 to 6% in 2011. The geohelminthiasis follow the same tendency, passing from 36 to 13% in the same period. Regarding the trachoma, it has dropped from 12 to 3%.

What is the significance for you for the 18th session of JAF and what are your expectations?
It is a great event for Burundi and Africa, a forum where will be debated relevant questions on the elimination of onchocerciasis, the implementation with other NTD of a joint action plan and the reinforcement of health systems.

What is your essential vision for PNIMTNC?
Is to have Burundi free from neglected tropical diseases.

National coordinators of endemic countries meeting in Ouagadougou from the 24th to 26th September 2012
Sensitization of the CAR parliamentarians, October 2012
Discussions with members of a community in South-Sudan
APOC bicycle gifts to a community at Galafandou, CAR.