It is with great honour and pleasure that the Republic of Congo is hosting the 19th session of the Joint Action Forum of the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control.

I seize this opportunity to convey the sincere thanks of the Government of Congo to WHO and all partners for the constant support and assistance given to African States in the search for solutions to the many problems encountered in the prevention and management of NTDs.

The Republic of Congo is one of beneficiary countries of this assistance, as exemplified by the technical and financial support provided by technical partners to finalize the National NTD Master Plan 2013-2017.

The WHO Regional Committee session held in Brazzaville from 2 to 6 September 2013 adopted a resolution on neglected tropical diseases. This decision is, in many ways, a sharp reminder to African decision-makers that we must face our responsibilities as regards these diseases. Eradication of all these diseases will require firm commitment by our Governments, a multi-sectoral response, and sincere involvement of donors and the pharmaceutical industry.

At a time when the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control is called upon to review its structure in order to better define its strategy, Congo endorses the adoption of the basic documents that will enable the new entity to achieve the objectives assigned.

The Congolese Government would like to convey its profound gratitude to all donors, the private sector, drug donation programmers, as well as executing agencies for their invaluable contributions to the search for ways to kick neglected tropical diseases out of Africa.

19th Session of the Joint Action Forum

Panel Session: "The role of the Joint Action Forum in the implementation of the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control (APOC)"

Panelists:
- A. Camara, Director of the Programme for Onchocerciasis Control in the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control (APOC)
- H. C. M. Opute-Mbembe, Director of the World Bank’s Regional Office for Africa
- E. P. N’goum, Director of the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control (APOC)

The panelists will discuss the role and impact of the Joint Action Forum in the implementation of the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control (APOC), including the challenges and opportunities faced by the programme.

JAF 19 - IMPORTANT CONTACTS AND GUIDE

TRANSPORTATION

HOTEL - REGIONAL OFFICE

For meetings organized at the Regional Office, daily transport is organized between the hotels and the Regional Office during meeting days.

TRANSPORTATION IN TOWN

The international airport of Brazzaville is about 4 km from the city Centre and about 10 km from the Regional Office. Taxis can be used as means of transportation. A ride by taxi costs at least 2,000 to 3,000 CFA between the airport and city Centre, and 1,000 CFA to 1,500 CFA within the city. Taxis are identified by their green and white paint. Certain hotels provide shuttle services.

WHO CONTACT PERSONS

Reception: Tel. 09 666 80 00

M. Charles-Aimey Pissara: Administrative Services
Tel. 09 509 01 98

Mme Désiré Tchouki: Conference and Protocol
Tel. 09 308 10 53

Maître Nicolas Gislon: SRDPC
Tel. 06 673 95 09

M. Damaké Dassou: Administrative Services
Tel. 09 308 10 98

Mlle Michelle Lolo: Attraction
Tel. 06 842 29 99

M. Frédéric Diamandoula: Transport
Tel. 09 661 36 32

M. Abdoulaye Doumbia, Security (FSO)
Tel. 09 308 10 87

BANK AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE

Currency exchange. The BCI Bank has an office on the premises of the Regional Office for currency exchange. The currency used in the Republic of Congo is CFA. Exchange rates are about:

1 Euro = 605.957 FCFA.
1 USD = 492.889 FCFA.

Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. You are requested to provide a copy of your passport and airplane ticket.

Automatic teller machines: Two ATMs are accessible in the main Hall of the Regional Office.

One of ECOBANK and the second of the international commercial bank (B.C.I.) The ATM of ECOBANK accept only cards of the ECOBANK network and the ATM of B.C.I. accept only VISA cards. ATMs are accessible every day, 24/24. Other distributions are accessible downtown near certain banks, 24/24.

RESTAURANTS

1. OLYMPIC PALACE: Tel. 222 81 34 36 / 06 840 92 17
2. LE JARDIN DES SAVOURES : OPPOSITE OLYMPIC PALACE HOTEL.
3. MADEIRA:
   - ON THE COMICE BANK CREDIT
   - DU CONGO: AT THE BANKS OF THE CONGO RIVER,
   - Tel.: 09 579 25 29
4. TERRAINAL: BEHInd THE CITY HALL.
5. IMAPO:
6. LA MANDARINE:
   - AVEUX FONCA,
   - Tel.: 222 81 34 36
7. NGENUHI: AT PLATEAU:
8. O SYMPATHIC:
   - NEXT TO THE CHES BUILDING IN THE CITY CENTER.
   - Tel.: 09 877 81 43

ELECTRICITY

220 volts - 230 volts AC/50

CONTACT NUMBERS OF WHO DISPENSARY

1. DR. ROLAND RIZET, WHO/KAFRO, Staff physician
Tel. 06 660 08 88

2. MME MINATA TRACH, Principal Nurse
Tel. 06 660 08 05

3. MME PAULITE DE RISO, Nurse
Tel. 06 666 38 11

JAF 19 - EXHIBITION

This year's exhibition at the entrance of the JAF-19 conference hall features neglected tropical diseases. Several key documents on onchocerciasis, lymphatic filariasis, leprosy and several other neglected diseases are available for free distribution. Electronic copies of the documents on display are also available on request at the NTD/APOC programme.

P rovisiona l Programme – D AY 3: Friday, 13 December 2013

RESEARCH

16. Current research within APOC and collaborating institutions
   (i) TDR supported research
   (ii) BMGF supported LF and Onchocerciasis related research
   (iii) DFID supported LF and Onchocerciasis related research
   (iv) BMGF supported Modelling group

17. Current research within APOC and collaborating institutions
   - Discussions
   - Conclusions and decisions on agenda items 16

18. Draft Research
   - Conclusion and decisions on agenda items 16

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE

17. Audit Report
   11:30-11:40

18. Financing of the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control (APOC)
   (i) Report of the Fiscal Agent (The World Bank)
   11:45-11:55

19. Statement by Donors
   11:55-12:15

20. Conclusion and decisions on agenda items 17, 18 and 19
   12:15-12:20

   11:30-11:40

20. Draft Research
   - Conclusion and decisions on agenda items 16

ONCHOCERCIASIS AND RELATED RESEARCH

20. Onchocerciasis and related activities/research
   (i) Macrofilaricide research (AVOL)
   12:25-12:45
   (ii) New regimens for NDA to control LF in Africa
   12:45-13:00

Lunch Break
   13:00-14:30

(iii) Mapping and further needs
   14:30-14:45
   (iv) LF Morbidity Management & Disability Prevention
   14:45-15:00

21. Onchocerciasis and related activities/research
   Cont’d

22. Final Communiqué
   (i) Final approval of the conclusions, decisions and adoption of the Final Communiqué
   15:10-16:30

Tea Break
   16:30-17:00

23. Closure of the nineteenth session of JAF
   17:00-17:30

CONTENTS

Opening Ceremony
Highlights of the WHO Progress Report
Provisional Programme – Day 2
APOC Director: A special session
JAF 18 President: A review of 2013 gives rise for optimism
JAF 19: Guide and important contacts
Provisional Programme – Day 3

EXCEPT FROM THE SPEECH OF DR MATHISIDO MOELI, REPRESENTING THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF WHO/Africa

It is a great pleasure for me to address you, and please Mr Luiz Gomes Sambo, Regional Director of WHO/Africa at this opening session. I would first like to express WHO’s sincere appreciation to the Government of the Republic of the Congo for the leadership and generosity in hosting this year’s JAF, as well as sincerely thank Honourable Ministers of Health, our development partners and donors, experts and country delegates for taking the time to attend this meeting.

The Republic of Congo is one of the 50 beneficiary countries of this assistance, as exemplified by the technical and financial support provided by technical partners to finalize the National NTD Master Plan 2013-2017.

This year’s meeting is particularly important because it provides an opportunity for the JAF to deliberate and be decisive about the future of APOC as proposed in the Concept Note on the new entity and the Strategic Plan for 2016-2025. Work and collaboration between APOC and the APRO NTD programme is being strengthened in order to assure synergies and greater effectiveness in tackling onchocerciasis and other NTDs. It would therefore be like to urge the JAF to consider ways of ensuring that progress toward the achievement of onchocerciasis elimination does not stall and that APOC’s experience, tools and resources benefit other NTDs, in a process entrenched in exchange of ideas and mutual learning.

I acknowledge the rapidly growing contribution by the pharmaceutical industry, our bilateral and multi-lateral donors, which adds to the momentum for an integrated approach to tackling NTDs and the support of the NGO and research community toward identifying innovative approaches to speeding up progress in the control and elimination of NTDs.

Finally, I would like you not to forget that the growth and development of a child is no longer affected by NTDs in our future; the struggle of a woman to live decently and honourably in spite of being disabled by NTDs is our struggle; the failure anywhere to provide what we reasonably can to the communities is our failure. We are bound to one another in our shared goal of tackling NTDs and ending extreme poverty. Let us all, as stakeholders, increase and sustain our commitments to tackling and achieving the goals of controlling and eliminating onchocerciasis and other NTDs.

On behalf of the Regional Director, I wish you successful and productive deliberations, and look forward to a positive outcome from this meeting.
The 19th session of the Joint Action Forum of the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control (APOC) began at the WHO Regional Office for Africa in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, on 11 December 2013 under the theme: “the role of APOC in the Context of Accelerated Elimination of Preventive Chemotherapy Neglected Tropical Diseases in the African Region”.

The official opening ceremony, chaired by the Congolese Minister of Health and Population, Mr François IBOVI, was attended by the representative of the Regional Director of the WHO Regional Office for Africa, the APOC Director, several Ministers of Health and heads of delegation from APOC member countries and ex-OCP countries, donors and partners. The meeting is scheduled to end on 13 December 2013. The Forum elected the Republic of Congo, in the person of the Minister of Health and Population, Mr François IBOVI, as the Chair for JAF19, and Sabine Institute as the Vice-Chair, in the person of Ambassador Marine.

The WHO progress report (1st September 2012- 31 August 2013) presented at JAF19 by Dr Jean-Baptiste Roungou, highlighted the main activities of APOC for the period. The latter essentially related to the mapping of diseases (onchocerciasis, Loa-loa, NTDs), treatment with ivermectin, co-implementation, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation, delimitation of ivermectin treatment areas, concept note and the 2016-25 strategic plan, partnership and collaboration.

In terms of outputs, the report noted the following:
- Treatment of over 100 million persons in 2012.
- Distribution of a total of 47,584,348 treatments and products through the CDTI distribution network.
- Conduct of mapping surveys in four countries in untreated hypo-endemic areas.
- Epidemiological and entomological evaluations in 11 countries.
- Formulation of a concept note to transform APOC into a new entity, and the related 2016-2025 strategic plan.

The report also highlighted the challenges to be met. These are financial constraints, limited human resources at the national level and at headquarters, the existence of conflict and post-conflict zones poor performance of some CDTI projects at country level, scaling-up of treatment and maintaining a high therapeutic coverage in all transmission areas, co-implementation of health interventions in border areas and treatment in Loa-loa-endemic areas.

To improve projects with performance issues, the report recommended the following: (i) targeted actions in five countries: Angola, Cameroon, DRC, Nigeria and South Sudan, (ii) re-launching of CDTI in South Sudan (iii) promotion of alternative strategies such as administering twice yearly treatment (Uganda, Ethiopia), and testing other medicines (Cameroon).

As regards the utilization of financial resources, Dr Sabine Ntakarutimana mentioned the disbursement of USD 37.7 million for countries with USD 20.2 million in 2012 and USD 12.67 million up to July 2013. Under achievements for 2013, the JAF Chair mentioned the preparation of the concept note and strategic plan 2016-2025 of the proposed new entity by the APOC management, members of the committee of sponsoring agencies, the transition task force and stakeholders.

The Director of the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control (APOC), in his address at the opening ceremony of the 19th session of the Joint Action Forum (JAF), noted the presence of a large number of ministers of health, representatives of member countries, nongovernmental development organizations (NGDOs), donors and other private sector partners involved in onchocerciasis control.

Referring to the theme of the meeting “the role of APOC in the context of the acceleration of the elimination of preventive chemotherapy neglected tropical diseases (PC-NTDs) in the African Region, Dr Jean-Baptiste Roungou stressed that this these diseases had a special significance for African governments and the international community. They are already committed to the fight against these diseases in order to reduce their impact on the health and development of poor populations.

Dr Roungou further highlighted the key role played by APOC, considered one of the best “public health successes in the African continent in the last two decades”. The Programme which has already started to prepare for its transformation into a new entity is committed to the fight against river blindness to the end while relentlessly working towards establishing the awaited new entity. Given the current global financial environment, financing conditions are no longer the same, but Dr Roungou expressed the hope that the current deficit of USD 22.4 million will be covered by contributions from all the partners involved in the fight.

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