NTDs: Stakeholders’ support in the establishment of a new elimination entity

Stakeholders of Oncho and LF programmes met on 4 and 5 November 2013 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, with a view to developing a more effective, rapid, efficient, and harmonized strategy to protect the health of over 120 million people exposed to onchocerciasis and lymphatic filariasis (LF).

More than 60 participants including representatives of the ministries of health of 28 APOC member countries, representatives of donors, Non-Governmental Development Organisations (NGDOs), the World Health Organisation (Geneva HQ, Brazzaville Regional Office and Ouagadougou Country Office) attended this meeting together with APOC consultants and technical and administrative staff.

One month away from the annual session of APOC’s ruling body (the Joint Action Forum) to be held in Brazzaville, Congo, this meeting is looking into the proposal of a new entity in charge of heading up NTD control. Several statutory meetings and consultation frameworks of APOC had already launched reflections on how to scale up the elimination of these diseases that impede the sustainable development of the African continent.

At the opening ceremony, Dr Djamilla Cabral, WHO Representative in Burkina Faso, stated that the remaining task is huge despite the successful outcomes of the multiple actions conducted by the Onchocerciasis control programmes (OCP and APOC) and the LF control programme over the past three decades. As the implementing agency, WHO shall continue supporting the future actions.

For his part, Mr Souleymane Savadogo, Technical Advisor to the Minister of Health of Burkina Faso, stated that such progress cannot be achieved without efficient coordination of actions both at national and international levels since the vectors of these diseases ignore national borders. He also commended the Onchocerciasis control programmes, based in Burkina Faso, for the key role they have already played in the control of River Blindness. ✦Thérèse Belobo
Viewpoints expressed by speakers at the opening ceremony

Souleymane Savadogo, TA to MoH Burkina Faso:

“These diseases are endemic in our countries. Therefore there is a need for coordinated action among the various states. This important meeting gives the stakeholders the opportunity to come to a consensus so as to find sustainable solutions to the various problems.”

Dr Djamila Cabral, WHO Representative in Burkina Faso:

“WHO’s support is multifacetted. First, because, as the implementing agency, WHO is highly involved; and secondly, because WHO is providing a strategic support since our role is to promote the highest attainable level of health to populations. Finally, WHO supports through advocacy and resource mobilization. This is all the most important since NTDs, in particular oncho and LF are still major plagues in terms of public health. They are poverty related diseases which have an important impact on countries’ socio-economic development. The support provided by the Regional Director for the organization of this meeting shows his interest for this Programme and the scope of the endeavor. It is quite normal to refer to a Programme which has yielded obvious success in the control of onchocerciasis.”

Thérèse Belobo