Dear staff members of WHO in the Africa Region,

As this year rapidly draws to a close, I wish all staff members and their families the very best of health, happiness and prosperity for 2013.

In spite of the challenges facing the health sector globally and particularly in the African Region, your continued dedication and hard work is making a significant contribution to the health of people across the Region.

I want to take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude to everyone for your commitment to WHO’s noble mission. These commendable efforts give credit to WHO’s work. I would like to particularly thank staff members who are working tirelessly in countries that are going through crisis and all WHO Representatives for their loyalty and quality response to Member States' requests.

During the past year, the Organization made commendable progress on various fronts including:

1. Strengthening partnerships with the Centre for Disease Control (CDC), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMG), HHA members and other development partners.

2. The WHO report - which provides recommendations on how to address the challenge of women’s health in Africa was launched by Her Excellency President Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia.

3. The African Health Observatory and the African Public Health Emergency Fund (APHEF) are now operational to facilitate evidence-based decision making by countries and supplement resources for emergency response respectively.

4. The alliance between the Health and Finance sector has been strengthened through joint ministerial meeting on Health Financing, towards improved management of financial resources in the health sector.

5. With WHO’s support the African Federation of Public Health Association (AFPHA) and the African Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (AFOG) were set up.

6. WHO contributed to the successful immunization of over 100 million people living in the meningitis belt with the MenAfriVac, resulting in no reported cases of Meningitis Type A in the vaccinated population. Polio eradication initiative is making significant progress.

7. WHO supported some countries to pass laws banning smoking in public places, tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship.

These and many more are the result of our collective efforts. You should all take pride in these achievements and in the coming year resolve to continue working towards improving the health of people.

My special appreciation go to WHO Representatives and Country Team Members of Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Cuba, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea Conakry, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and Tunisia and for their hospitality and support during my missions to these countries.

Finally on your behalf, I extend best wishes to our Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan, the other five Regional Directors and all health stakeholders.

Compliments of the season and a Happy New Year! Luis G. Sambo, Regional Director

CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Wishes from the WHO/AFRO Regional Director</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Appointment: Dr. Maria Fatimata Siaka, new Acting Director of AFRO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Wishes from the outgoing Director of APOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>JAF 18: Strategic Plan and Budgets approved in Bujumbura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>50th anniversary of the WHO in Cameroon, marked by celebration of Dr. Onwujekwe’s birthday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>ECD (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control) regional office opens in Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dr. Robert Skidmore, Malaria Reporting System program coordinator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WHO is not accountable for any erroneous opinion or information expressed or contained in this document.
Appointment: One boss steps aside, another boss steps in. Dr Paul-Samson Lusamba-Dikassa in retirement has a successor in the person of Dr Chris Ngenda Mwikisa.

The mystery and suspense did not last long. Dr Chris Ngenda Mwikisa was appointed Acting Director of APOC by the WHO/AFRO Regional Director on 21 December 2012 to replace Dr Paul-Samson Lusamba-Dikassa who has retired. The former Director left on December 31, 2012, while the new Director arrived on January 1, 2013.

Dr. Mwikisa Ngenda Chris still retains his position as Coordinator of the Inter-country Team for East and Southern Africa based in Harare, Zimbabwe. His is also the chair of the APOC Committee of Sponsoring Agencies, a position he has been holding for several years.

Welcome, Mr. Director!

Wishes from Director of APOC

Now that I’m finally about to leave such a great country, namely Burkina Faso, I’d like to thank from the bottom of my heart all the women and men who welcomed me with open arms and who, by adopting me, not only helped me to fulfill my duties but also to commune with them in a collective passion for the elimination of river blindness.

To us a child was born ... A new dawn on the horizon of APOC is rising. God bless his daughters and sons who work tirelessly to promote health in our continent! May 2013 be the year of the consolidation of the gains made and a leap to new heights for APOC! May it be also, and above all, a year of sharing with the members of your families! May you be able to harvest sufficient time to care for them! Dr P-S Lusamba-Dikassa

JAF 18: The Strategic plan and budgets presented by APOC, approved in Bujumbura

As expected, the 18th session of the Joint Action Forum was held in Bujumbura, the capital city of Burundi, from 11 to 13 December 2012. Three days of intense work that led to the approval of the 2016-2025 plan of action and budget of APOC as well as the action plans and budgets for the period of transition from 2013 to 2015.

It is worth noting that the 2016-2025 budget, built in two five-year phases, amounts to about $US 152 million, while the transition plan of 2013 has an adjustment budget of $US 6.6 million, and the budget of the biennium 2014-2015 nearly amounts to $US 51 million. The review of the budgets and the plan of action was done in the closed doors sessions, by donors, NGOs as well as countries.

Moreover, it was noted that the session, directed by a predominantly female leadership with the Burundian Minister of Public Health, Dr Sabine Ntakarutimana, as Chair, and the

Chief Executive of Sightsavers, Dr Caroline Harper, as Vice-chair, reflected the image of an exemplary international cooperation for the common cause of eliminating onchocerciasis and other neglected tropical diseases.
The 50th anniversary of the WHO in Cameroon characterized by consolidation

Cameroon and the World Health Organization have celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of their cooperation during a week of activities marking the evolution of the basic Agreement on technical assistance adopted on 8 October 1962.

The solemnity of this celebration was enhanced by the presence in Yaoundé of the Regional Director of WHO / AFRO, Dr Luis Gomes Sambo. He was decorated with the medal of Officer of the Ordre National de la valeur by the Cameroon Minister of Public Health, on behalf of the President of the Republic. On the same occasion, the Representative of WHO in Cameroon, Dr. Charlotte Faty Ndiaye, received the medal of Chevalier of the Ordre National de la valeur. This event was attended by experts, special guests, development partners, heads of diplomatic missions, representatives of the UN agencies, the media, communities and the general public.

Among the highlights of the celebration were: the proceedings of the Regional Director with national authorities (President of the Republic, President of the National Assembly, Minister of Health), an inaugural conference at the University of Yaoundé I during which Dr. Luis Gomes Sambo spoke on the following topic "Vaccination, factor of development"; the inauguration of the UN Dispensary, a film on "Technological innovation for epidemiological surveillance" relating to improving the recovery of epidemiological data, a gala night, a visit to the International Centre for Research Chantal Biya (CIRCB), and the regional Director’s meeting with the staff of country WHO to whom he expressed his satisfaction regarding the quality of services and the initiative to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary.

During these days of celebration, the Director of APOC was represented by Dr. François Sobela, Health Systems Specialist at the Unit of Sustainable Drug Distribution.

All these festivities have contributed to inform stakeholders and beneficiaries of the milestones in the evolution of this cooperation, namely, achievements and prospects, and also to increase the visibility of WHO with institutions, partners and the general public.

Farewell Dr Lusamba-Dikassa: From Bujumbura to Ouagadougou, celebration of a retirement

The time of retirement for Dr Paul-Samson Dikassa-Lusamba has come with a cortège of congratulations and praise. The Joint Action Forum was the first to publicly acknowledge the merits of the outgoing Director of the African Programme for Onchocerciasis control, at its 18th session held from 11 to 13 December in Bujumbura. From the first day, immediately after he himself announced his retirement, the assessment of his service as head of APOC were underscored by the speakers of the day and applauded by all participants. At the end of the session, his wisdom, knowledge and dedication were also commended before the giving of a gift from the Chairman of the Technical Consultative Committee, Professor Mamoun Homeida.
Then back to Ouagadougou, the professional and human values of Dr Lusamba-Dikassa were celebrated during a farewell party, organized by the WHO one staff Association in Burkina Faso (ASOB) on 20 December 2012. From general opinion expressed loud and clearly by both Dr. Laurent Yameogo, Coordinator of the Office of the Director and Marie Zougmore, one of his assistants, Dr Paul-Samson Lusamba-Dikassa’s competences, wisdom, and love for APOC were thoroughly exalted.

Recognizing the excellent support he has received from the programme staff, the outgoing Director of APOC gave thanks to the Providence which has “given him everything”. He plans to first take a little rest. Then, he will return to his former occupation, which is that of a professor at the University of Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, his homeland.

*Fair winds, Sir!* ♦

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Dr Lusamba-Dikassa being presented with one of his gifts by Emma

The WHO Representative in Burkina Faso: “The enduring image in our memories is that Dr Lusamba-Dikassa is a very thoughtful and available person”

The Coordinator of the Director’s Office: “Mr. Director, we gained from your wisdom”

An overview of the party

Marie, one of the Director’s Assistants, dancing with Daisy, the artist

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