AFRICAN LEADERS MALARIA ALLIANCE | ALMA

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Swaziland wins high-level award for significant progress against malaria

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA (30 January 2017) – At a time of historic progress toward a malaria-free Africa, the African Leaders Malaria Alliance (ALMA) honoured eight African countries that have shown commitment and innovation in the fight against the disease.

Today at the 28th African Union Summit, the 2017 ALMA Awards for Excellence were awarded to:

- Botswana, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Swaziland and Uganda, for their impact on malaria incidence and mortality; and
- Chad, for its leadership in the fight against malaria.

"Thanks to strong African leadership and innovative new partnerships, we are making unprecedented progress in the fight against malaria," said H.E Idriss Déby Itno, President of Chad and current Chairperson of the African Union. "The success of these countries shows the powerful impact that dedication and sufficient funding can have."

Swaziland is one of three Southern African countries on track to eliminate malaria by 2020, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). The country has made significant progress in scaling-up malaria control interventions, leading to a significant reduction in malaria burden in the country. Swaziland was the first country in Africa to introduce a malaria elimination scorecard to enhance tracking, accountability and action towards malaria elimination.

WHO estimates that the country decreased malaria incidence and malaria mortality by more than 40 percent between 2010 to 2015. Swaziland also reduced its reported number of malaria cases to 157, with five malaria-related deaths in 2015. Swaziland is among Africa's leaders in terms of the proportion of the population protected with indoor residual spraying, with a reported coverage rate of 97 percent. Swaziland has also implemented a comprehensive surveillance strategy as part of its national control program. The country is part of the Elimination 8 initiative (E8), which is working to strengthen regional coordination in order to achieve elimination in each of the E8 member countries and reduce cross-border malaria transmission.

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“Swaziland has made fighting malaria a priority, and it is paying off,” said Joy Phumaphi, Executive Secretary of ALMA. “Commitment at every level of the country is driving remarkable progress.”

The 2017 ALMA Awards for Excellence come just six months after the adoption of the ‘Catalytic Framework’ at the 27th African Union Summit last July. The framework provides a roadmap for African countries to increase domestic resources, expand the use of innovation and technology, and improve health infrastructure to eliminate malaria from the continent by 2030.

“Congratulations to Swaziland,” said Dr. Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko, Commissioner for Social Affairs at the African Union Commission. Further, he said, “I welcome ALMA’s continued partnership in the fight to end malaria. In this regard, the Catalytic Framework is providing strategic direction to guide countries to achieve malaria control and elimination.”

Since 2000, malaria mortality rates across the continent have fallen by 62 percent in all age groups and by 69 percent among children under five. The increase in those sleeping under long-lasting insecticidal nets, or protected by indoor residual spraying, as well as diagnostic testing of children and treatment of pregnant women has contributed to significantly lowering incidence and mortality in Africa. These achievements come at a time when African countries are providing more domestic funding to fight malaria.

The growing role of African leaders is also reflected in the recent formation of the End Malaria Council, a group of committed business and public sector leaders that has come together to ensure malaria eradication remains a global priority. Five of the nine leaders on the council are African: H.E Idriss Déby Itno, President of Chad; H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia and former ALMA Chair; H.E. Jakaya Kikwete, former President of Tanzania and founding ALMA chair; Graça Machel, Founder of Foundation for Community Development; and Aliko Dangote, President and Chief Executive of the Dangote Group. The council will explore innovative approaches to mobilize political will and resources and develop new tools to help end malaria.

ALMA will also be working closely with the new Roll Back Malaria Chief Executive Officer Dr. Kesetebirhan Admasu, former Minister of Health of Ethiopia.

Malaria remains a critical threat in Africa – the region still bears the highest global malaria burden. In 2015, 195 million of the 212 million new malaria cases and 394,000 of the world’s 429,000 malaria-related deaths were in Africa.

About ALMA

Founded in 2009, ALMA is a ground-breaking coalition of African Heads of State and Government working across country and regional borders to achieve a malaria-free Africa by 2030. All African Union member countries are members of ALMA. The ALMA Scorecard for Accountability & Action is an important tool, which tracks progress and drives action.

The ALMA Awards for Excellence celebrate exemplary leadership in malaria control and elimination efforts. The Awards are chosen by an independent selection committee comprised of leaders and experts in the areas of health, academia and the private sector.

For more information, visit www.alma2030.org

About the African Union

The African Union spearheads Africa's development and integration in close collaboration with African Union Member States, the Regional Economic Communities and African citizens. AU Vision: to accelerate progress towards an integrated, prosperous and inclusive Africa, at peace with itself, playing a dynamic role in the continental and global arena, effectively driven by an accountable, efficient and responsive Commission.

For more information, visit www.au.int/

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