

**Directorate of Information and Communication****PRESS RELEASE****The Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe observes the 2019 Africa Vaccination Week and Launches the National Campaign for the Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA)**

**24<sup>th</sup> April 2019:** The Government of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe and the African Union Commission in collaboration with the World Health Organization Africa Regional Office (WHO AFRO) and Global Vaccine Alliance (GAVI) have together, observed the Africa Vaccination Week and launched the national Campaign for the Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA). The President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, H.E Evaristo Carvalho presided over the 2019 Africa Vaccination Week and launched the national Campaign for the Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA), making Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe the 51<sup>st</sup> African Union member state to launch CARMMA.

The Africa's annual Vaccination Week is being observed at a time that the continent is celebrating the launch of the Malaria vaccine on the continent. Malawi has already launched the vaccine and Ghana is set to follow soon. Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe has a 93% immunization rate which is higher than the continental average hence putting Sao Tome on the path of achieving the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 3, to reduce the under-five mortality rate to 25.0 per 1000 live births and Neonatal mortality rate to 12 per 1000 live births. This is commendable and worthy of emulation by other member states.

The opening was under the patronage of H.E. Evaristo Carvalho, President of the Republic. The following remarks were made from high level dignitaries attending the event; Hon. Dr. Edgar Neves, Minister of Health of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe; Dr. Margaret Agama-Anyetei, Head of Health, Nutrition and Population of the African Union Commission; Mrs. Claudina Augusto Da Cruz, WHO Representative in Sao Tome and Principe; Ms. Chioma Nwachukwu, GAVI Representative and Ms. Mariavittoria Balota, UNICEF Representative among other high level dignitaries that attended the event. were;

The event was concluded with a high level health field visit to the District of Cantagalo to commemorate the 2019 Africa Vaccination Week and the 51<sup>st</sup> national CARMMA launch. The community based event highlighted the importance of the involvement of parents/guardians and service providers in the delivery of Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MCNH) services including immunization through a theatrical performance by young people from the district. The visit afforded His Excellency the President of the Republic and the Honorable Minister of Health the opportunity to immunize a one month old baby as a symbol of their commitment to advocate for 100% vaccination coverage in Sao Tome and Principe. There were seven stands that offered health services and information including family planning issues and information on

nutrition and population. The President and dignitaries present visited each stand and interacted with the health practioners, service providers, student clubs and the community.

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