

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

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World Malaria Day: Zero Malaria Starts With Me

Today, the African Union Commission joins the world to celebrate the World Malaria Day by declaring the theme of the day: “Zero Malaria Starts with Me” and committing to step up the fight to end this deadly disease.

The theme is inspired by a continental campaign called **Zero Malaria Starts With Me** led by the Commission in partnership with the RBM Partnership to End Malaria to strengthen the fight against malaria through increased and sustained investment and political will in Africa. The Campaign is active in 14 AU Member States.

Ministries of health, national malaria control programmes, district health offices, health facilities and community health workers (CHWs) have done substantial work to dramatically control malaria. The progress is tangible and visible in communities as more countries draw closer to elimination. Three African Union (AU) Member States have been declared malaria-free. This success stands to show that elimination of malaria in Africa is attainable.

2020 is a crucial year of action in the fight against malaria in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Severe disruptions to access to antimalarial medicines and prevention-based campaigns could lead to doubling in number of malaria deaths in sub-Saharan Africa this year compared to 2018, according to a new modelling analysis released by the World Health Organisation. The great work and collaborative effort have to be sustained so we do not reverse progress attained to-date.

The Commission also encourages unwavering commitment and perseverance of the people and leaders of Member States through this unprecedented time. We call for amplified fight against malaria through a collective ownership approach by communities. We also call for leaders to not only prioritize funding and programs that will save more lives, but to also step up as champions for the fight against killer diseases such as malaria.

Early March 2020, His Excellency Uhuru Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya, was appointed Chair of the African Leaders Malaria Alliance (ALMA). He announced his four priorities for his two-year term with the aim to eliminate malaria from the continent by 2030. The four ambitious areas of action he outlined are: Digitization and real time data which includes creation of a digital platform to provide real time access to malaria-related data at country level; Engagement with regional economic blocs in Africa and Heads of State and Government to address key challenges and provide solutions in the fight against malaria; Establish at least 15 new End Malaria Councils and Funds to boost high-level, multi-sectoral engagement and advocacy at country level while increasing domestic resource mobilization; and Create Youth Advisory Groups across Africa to champion youth engagement.

“His Excellency President Kenyatta’s priorities for ALMA gained the immediate support of the African Union. We know that achieving these four priority areas will accelerate progress towards a malaria-free Africa,” commented Her Excellency Mrs. Amira El-Fadil, Commissioner for Social Affairs for the African Union Commission.

Malaria is preventable and treatable. Attaining a malaria-free status will free up resources to address other health and development priorities and accelerate the move to Goal Three of AU Agenda 2063: A healthy, prosperous Africa. We must re-commit to this goal, and work together to make it happen.

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