



**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
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PRESS RELEASE

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**REGIONAL COMMEMORATION OF AFRICA MALARIA DAY
2005 IN ZAMBIA**

“Partners Remain United against Malaria”

LUSAKA- As the Week-long Regional Africa Malaria Day 2005 commemorative activities come to a close here in Zambia, local, regional and international partners in the fight against Malaria have remained united and re-affirmed their commitment to efforts targeted at prevention and control of malaria. Ministers of health from Malawi and Zimbabwe and representatives from South Africa and Swaziland attended the regional commemoration. Representatives from UNICEF, WHO, World Bank, Roll Back Malaria Partnership and other regional and international bilateral and multilateral organizations including the Global Fund on Malaria, TB and HIV/AIDS and the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation were also present.

The official launch of the Regional Commemoration of Africa Malaria Day took place at the Mulungushi International Conference Centre on the 25th of April. The Vice President of the Republic of Zambia Honourable Lupando Mwape officiated at the event. In his official launch statement, the Vice President stated that Malaria still remained a major health challenge and that it had negatively affected economies in Africa as a result of the high costs in health care. He recognized the fact that since the inception of the Roll Back Malaria partnership, many countries including Zambia had benefited from the resources for scaling up interventions in prevention and control.

In a statement read on behalf of the World Health Organization Regional Director, Dr. Luis G. Sambo, Dr. Antoine Kabore stated that it was not possible that many African countries would achieve the agreed upon mid-term 60% coverage of the Abuja targets by the end of 2005. However, he recognized the appreciable progress that many countries had made in many areas including, making insecticide treated nets more readily available, home management of malaria, adoption of more efficacious artemisinin combination therapies, indoor residual spraying and malaria in pregnancy. He urged countries to rededicate themselves and to wage a more coordinated fight.

Professor Awa Maria Coll-seck, Executive Secretary of the Roll Back Malaria Secretariate bemoaned the high morbidity and mortality due to malaria and echoed the successes that many African countries had scored in Rolling Back Malaria since the Abuja declaration, five years ago and called for continued efforts.

Yvonne Chaka Chaka, the renowned South African musician was among the delegates at the launch, this time, invited as a malaria ambassador. Yvonne emphasized that malaria is deadly, and that it is preventable and treatable, hence, the need for mass education of the public.

The launch attracted various partners, public and private sector organisations, NGOs and community based organizations and the general public.

A series of high profile events and community-based activities characterized the week-long commemoration for purposes of creating public awareness and advocacy. One of the major highlights of the week was the official launch of the newly refurbished National Malaria Control Centre in Lusaka on the 25th of April. Another, highlight was the Drive Against Malaria Campaign, spearheaded by David Robertson.

David Robertson, a malaria activist and global explorer, was flagged off by ministry of health officials and partners from Kenya on 11th April, and used his "Malaria drive" through Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia to raise awareness about malaria. On his route he distributed more than 250 insecticide treated nets to vulnerable groups and met paramount Chief Mpezeni in Eastern Province before arriving in Lusaka in time for the regional launch of Africa Malaria Day on 25th April. David Robertson led a team of local partners to State House where he was met by the First lady Mrs. Maureen Mwanawasa as part of his advocacy drive for partnership, involvement and commitment. The Zambian Cyclists Association also organized a "Malaria cycle race" stretching more than 200 kilometres from Mazabuka town to Lusaka which also culminated to the launch of Africa Malaria Day.

The Roll Back Malaria Partners organized a one-week Malaria Exhibition at the National Museum in Lusaka, with participation from other counties in the region, including Malawi and Zimbabwe. The Exhibition attracted people from different walks of life who benefited from the distribution of various information and educational materials and through interaction with the partners.

There are at least 350-500 million cases of malaria each year globally resulting in more than one million deaths. Around 80% of these deaths occur in Africa, mostly in young children. Malaria is Africa's leading cause of under-five mortality (20%) and constitutes 10% of the continent's overall disease burden. It accounts for 40% of public expenditure, 30-50% of inpatient admissions and up to 50% of outpatient visits in areas with high transmission.

The theme for Africa Malaria Day 2005 is **"Unite against Malaria and the slogan is "Together we can beat Malaria"**. The theme has been selected to focus more on the need for unity and coherence among all partners and stakeholders in the fight against malaria. The Abuja declaration and Plan of Action aims to halve the burden of Malaria by 2010.