



20th SESSION OF THE JOINT ACTION FORUM OPENED TODAY AT THE UN CONFERENCE CENTER IN ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA



The twentieth session of the Joint Action Forum (JAF) of the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control (APOC) opened today 8th December 2014 in the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This year's session, scheduled to take place from 8th to 12 December is hosted by the Government of The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

The JAF is the top governing body of APOC and consists of representatives from participating countries, donors, non-governmental development organizations (NGDOs), the Technical Consultative Committee (TCC), and Merck & Co., Inc. from the private sector. The JAF meets once a year to decide on the overall policy and strategy of the Programme, discuss and approve APOC's plan of action and budget, and review the progress report of APOC.

This year's JAF is unique in that, owing to the new momentum of elimination of NTDs, it is taking place in conjunction with the 8th Global Alliance for Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis (GAELF) and the first meeting of the stakeholders of the London Declaration, known as the Global Shistosomiasis Alliance.

The main theme of this 20th session is: "Building partnerships to achieve the accelerated elimination of Preventive Chemotherapy NTDs in the African Region." The major issues to be discussed include the progress made by APOC on control towards elimination and the preparation for the new Programme for Elimination of Neglected Diseases in Africa (PENDA).

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JAF 20 HOST TOWN

Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, is the host town of this twentieth session of the Joint Action Forum (JAF20). Addis Ababa means "New Flower" in Amharic, the official language of the country, a name that was given when the city was founded by Emperor Menelik II in 1886. His wife, Empress Tayitu Bitul, chose the site for the seat of the throne. The city is populated by people from different regions of the country.



Ethiopia, the second-most populated nation of the African continent, is located in the horn of Africa, and is bordered by Eritrea to the north and northeast, Djibouti and Somalia to the east, Sudan and South Sudan to the west, and Kenya to the south. The nation is a multilingual society with around 80 ethnic groups and almost as many languages, with the widely spoken languages being Amharic, Oromiffa and Tigrigna. Ethiopia has often been called the origin of mankind due to various humanoid fossil discoveries like the Australopithecine Lucy and the Homo sapiens idaltu.

Addis Ababa is the largest city in Ethiopia, with a population close to 3.5 million people. It has the status of both a city and a state. It is where the African Union is based. It also hosts the headquarters of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and numerous other continental and international organizations. Addis Ababa is therefore often referred to as "**the political capital of Africa**" due to its historical, diplomatic and political significance for the continent.

For the visitor that seeks to experience the city, a number of attractions exist like the National Museum where the historical fossils are on display, the mountain-top view of Addis from the top of Entoto Mountain, just 8 kilometers away from the UN compound, and a variety of Ethiopian, other African, European, Mediteranean and Asian cuisine (*refer to the back of the newsletter for restaurant suggestions*). The city also has several modern malls and traditional souvenir shops for shopping and memorabilia.

PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF THE OPENING CEREMONY

Chair: Honourable Federal Minister of Health of Ethiopia	
Welcome address by Dr Pierre M'Pélé , WHO Representative in Ethiopia	09:00 - 10:00
Welcome address by Director of APOC, Dr Jean - Baptiste ROUNGOU	
Address by Global Alliance for the Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis (GAELF) Dr Adrian Hopkins	
Address by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) – Dr Julie Jacobson	
Address by African Union (AU) Representative, Dr Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko	
Address by outgoing Chair: Honourable Minister of Health of Republic of Congo Mr François Ibovi	
Message of WHO Regional Director for Africa read by Dr Pierre M'Pélé , WHO Representative in Ethiopia	
Opening address of the 20 th JAF: Honourable Federal Minister of Health of Ethiopia, H.E. M. Kesete-Birhan Admasu	
Tea/coffee break	

HIGHLIGHTS OF WHO 2014 REPORT

During the period 2013-2014, steps were taken towards achieving the targets set towards setting up PENDA for the elimination of onchocerciasis and lymphatic filariasis, while supporting Preventive Chemotherapy-Neglected Tropical Diseases (PC-NTDs) from 2016 onwards after the closure of APOC. The Programme governing bodies continued to provide leadership and guidance, and 22 APOC countries received funding in 2013, while 20 were funded for the 1st semester of 2014. In 2014: 124 Community Directed Treatment with Ivermectin (CDTI) projects and six National Onchocerciasis Task Force (NOTF) secretariats benefited from the Programme's financial support. In the context of scaling up of onchocerciasis and lymphatic filariasis (LF) elimination and support to the control and elimination of other PC-NTDs, 23 NTD national professional officers (NPOs) and technical advisors were recruited to provide technical support to 13 countries. APOC Management paid advocacy visits to some countries and partners in an effort to raise funds for the Trust Fund.

Emphasis was put on the following: disease mapping, CDTI implementation, impact assessment of treatment of onchocerciasis, partnership and collaboration, and capacity building.

Disease mapping results showed that mass distribution of medicines (MDM) for onchocerciasis needs to be launched in all untreated areas of four health districts in Congo and in 11 health zones in DRC. Progress has been made in CDTI implementation. According to the reports of 24 countries 100,693,541 persons were treated for onchocerciasis. Likewise, according to the reports of 17 countries, 113,555,882 were treated for LF. In 2013, for the purpose of assessing elimination of onchocerciasis, a phase 1b epidemiological assessment was conducted in Burundi, Chad and Ethiopia added to previous epidemiological assessments. The results suggested that the foci evaluated may have reached the elimination threshold but this needs confirmation using entomological procedures.

In line with its capacity building activity, a total of 107,275 health workers from 24 countries, all categories combined, were trained at various workshops on CDTI strategy, entomological and epidemiological evaluation, data management, cytotoxicology and financial management. In these countries, female community drug distributors (CDDs) represent 32.8% of the total number of CDDs involved in MDM campaigns. There is an increase of 2% in female participation compared to 30.8% recorded in 2012. A more detailed report will be presented under agenda item 5 of the meeting.

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME OF WORK - DAY 1, MONDAY 08TH DECEMBER 2014

Election of Officers	10:30-10:40
Adoption of the Agenda	10:40-10:45
Reflections of the Committee of Sponsoring Agencies	10:45-11:05
PROGRESS ON ELIMINATION	
Report of the World Health Organization	11:05-11:25
Discussion	11:25-11:45
Report of the Technical Consultative Committee (TCC)	11:45-12:00
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions Conclusions and decisions on the above agenda items 	12:00-12:15 12:15-12:25
Country reports: Statements by Honorable Ministers of Health – Angola, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, CAR, DRC	12:25-13:00
Lunch Break	13:00-14:30
Country reports (con't): Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Sudan, Equatorial Guinea, Chad, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Senegal, Gabon, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi	14:30-15:40
Summary of treatment coverage: Presentation by Representative of countries	15:40-16:00
Tea Break	16:00-16:30
Statements by the Honorable Ministers of Health – Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda,	16:30-17:10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions 	17:10-17:30
Conclusions and decisions on the above agenda item	17:30-17:35
Report of the NGDO Coordination Group for Onchocerciasis Elimination	17:35-17:45
Discussions / Conclusions and decisions on the above agenda items	17:45-17:55 / 17:55-18:00

APOC MISSION AND FONCTIONS

The African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control (APOC) was set up in 1995 to expand and build on the successes of the Onchocerciasis Control Programme in West Africa (OCP). The overall objective of APOC is to eliminate Onchocerciasis as an important public health disease in all endemic African countries.

APOC is a unique global public-private partnership. Through this partnership with a shared vision, the APOC partnership is working towards a common goal. It is composed of 31 participating African countries and more than 180,000 endemic communities therein; 20 donor countries and organizations ; 15 non-government development organizations (NGDOs); Merck & Co. Inc. and research organizations and institutions.

Member countries are: Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda.

The World Health Organization (WHO) is the executing agency responsible for the running of implementing operations of the programme, while the fiscal agent is World Bank, in charge of fund-raising and management of the APOC Trust Fund.

Since the beginning of the year 2014, the African Programme for Onchocerciasis control (APOC) has been in a process of a two-year transition period before its transformation into a new entity that will support African countries for onchocerciasis and lymphatic filariasis elimination. The new entity that will be launched in 2016 will also contribute to reinforcing the efforts made in the control of other preventive-chemotherapy Neglected Tropical Diseases (PC-NTDs).

CSA 149 MET PRIOR TO JAF 20



Prior to the opening of the 20th Joint Action and Forum (FAC 20), the Committee of Sponsoring Agencies (CSA) held its 149th session in the United Nation Conference Center, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 6 to 7 December 2014.

The following items were discussed: reflections on USAID and DFID statements and the statement of WHO protocol issues and other JAF20 organizational arrangements including JAF scenario, refined budget and scenarios of the strategic plan of action, 2016-2025 of the Programme for Elimination of Neglected Diseases in Africa (PENDA), governance structure of PENDA, reflections of the CSA to JAF20 and the key elements of the presentation on WHO Progress report

The statement of the WHO was delivered to the CSA by Dr Hiro Nakatani, WHO Assistant Director General.

This session as the four previous ones in the context of transition has been expanded to countries, donors and key partners. The main conclusions of this session will be presented during JAF.

PROVISIONAL AGENDA OF WORK - DAY 2, TUESDAY 09 DECEMBER 2014

PREPARATION FOR PENDA

Refined budget of the Strategic Plan of Action, 2016-2025	08:30-08:50
Discussions	08:50-09:00
Governance Structure of the new entity	09:00-09:20
Discussions	09:20-09:50
Conclusions and decisions on the above agenda items	09:50-10:00

Tea Break

10:10-10:30

CLOSED SESSIONS

Closed session on how to implement the strategic plan: Ministers of Health of African countries , Donors , NGDOs	10:30-13:00
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Lunch Break

13:00-14:30

Outcome of the sessions of the: Ministers of Health of African countries , Donors , NGDOs	14:30-15:00
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Conclusions and decisions on the above agenda items	15:00-15:10
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PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE

Audited Financial report and Audit opinion	15:10-15:20
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Financing of the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control (APOC): Report of the Fiscal Agent (The World Bank)	15:20-15:30
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Statements by Donors Discussions and decisions on the above agenda items	15:30 -16:00
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Date and place of the twenty-first session of JAF	16:00-16:10
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FINAL COMMUNIQUE AND CLOSURE

Final Communique	16:40 -18:00
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FAC20 : GUIDE ET CONTACTS IMPORTANTS

WHO CONTACT PERSONS

Dr P. M'pele , WHO Representative for Ethiopia	Cel: 0911 202 633
M. P. Lessimi , Operations Officer	Cel: 0935 998 641
Mrs Genet Aweke , Accommodation	Cel: 0911 663 397
Ms Lishar Negussie , Travel	Cel: 0911 627 120
Mrs Loza M Tesfaye , Communication	Cel: 0911 144 194
Dr Chris Mwikisa , Manager Corporate Services	Cel: 0938 058 153
M. Yaovi Aholou , Programme Officer	Cel: 0939 594 779
Mme Diane Mabilia , Travel & Transport	Cel: 0942 220 898

RESTAURANTS IN ADDIS ABEBA

SuSHI	Behind Workers'promises building	0920061063
Alladin Restaurant	Off Bole road, near the Japanese Embassy's residence	0116638181
Fusion Bistro	In front of Kuwait Embassy	0118300307
Greek club	Off Olympia road, further down from greek	0115530485
Amsterdam Bar & Restaurant	next to Bole Mini	0116615714
Rodeo Bar & Restaurant	Bole opposite Shoa Supermarket	0115510294
Top View	Up the hill from Megenagna roundabout,	0116511573
Yod Abyssinia Restaurant	Bole Medhaniyalem Area next to Brass	0116612985

LUNCH

Lunch will be freely offered to the participants and will be available at the conference center during the conference from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m .

UN MEDICAL CLINIC

The UN medical clinic will be available for any medical emergencies. However, participants are recommended to have a medical insurance .

UN SECURITY CONTACTS IN ETHIOPIA

M. Carlos Lopes , Officier Désigné,	Tel: 251 (0) 011 551 1231
M. Eugène Owusu , UNDP,	Tel: 251 (0) 011 551 1025
M. Francis Sikaonga , Conseiller sécurité UNDSS,	Cel: +251 911 511 906
M. Ouseini Ouedraogo , Chef de la section sécurité,	Cel: +251 911 201 802
N° d'urgence (radio room):	Tel: 011 5511726 011 5444428

CURRENCY

The currency in Ethiopia is Ethiopian Birr. The foreign currencies should be exchanged only in authorized banks and hotels. Commercial Bank of Ethiopia has a branch near the conference center (ECA campus). ATMs are available at the UN Conference Center and in most hotels.

The currency declaration form should be kept as it could be requested during departure. If at the end of your stay, you still have Birr you may change them into foreign currencies at the airport prior to departure. To do that, further to the currency declaration form you should provide all the exchange receipts. The exchange rate is: **1 USD = 19,474 ETB**

TRANSPORTATION FROM HOTEL TO UNCC

A bus will be assigned to each hotel for participants transportation to the conference center vice versa. A hostess will be in each hotel to assist participants. Bus numbers and pick up hours are as follow :

Sheraton :	Bus n°1	07H30
Hilton :	Bus N°2 / N°2 – 1	07H30
Jupiter:	Bus N°4	08H00
Intercontinental:	Bus N°5; N°5-1; N°5-2	08H00
Radisson/G. Yordanos:	Bus N°3	08H00
Ambassador:	Bus N°7	07H30
Desalegn/Ambassador:	Bus N°6	07H30

Buses will leave UNCC to hotels around 9H00 p.m every day.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT & TAXIS

Taxis: Yellow taxis are available in front of most of the hotels. Their rates are fixed and receipts are delivered.

Blue Taxis and buses: Kindly avoid blue taxis and buses for security reasons. Pickpockets are frequently found there and the drivers are not recommended. Please avoid them!

SPECIAL EVENTS

8 December: A cocktail reception will be offered to all the participants by the Honourable Minister of Health of the Democratic Republic of Ethiopia at 6:30 pm at the venue of the meeting.

9 December : Ministers forum including all Heads of Delegation will take place at the venue of the meeting (UNCC) and will be followed by a dinner at 6:30 p.m.



Community-directed treatment with ivermectin



Community mobilization for the control of onchocerciasis.