

Virtual High-Level Meeting with ECOWAS Parliament on Malaria Elimination on 5 August 2021

While the ECOWAS region accounts for about 10% of the global at-risk population, it accounts for nearly half of all malaria cases and deaths in the world. Malaria is endemic in the ECOWAS region and is a leading cause of hospital visits. Its effects go beyond sickness and deaths. It is also responsible for slowdown in economic growth at the national level, increased household spending, absenteeism and lost productivity.

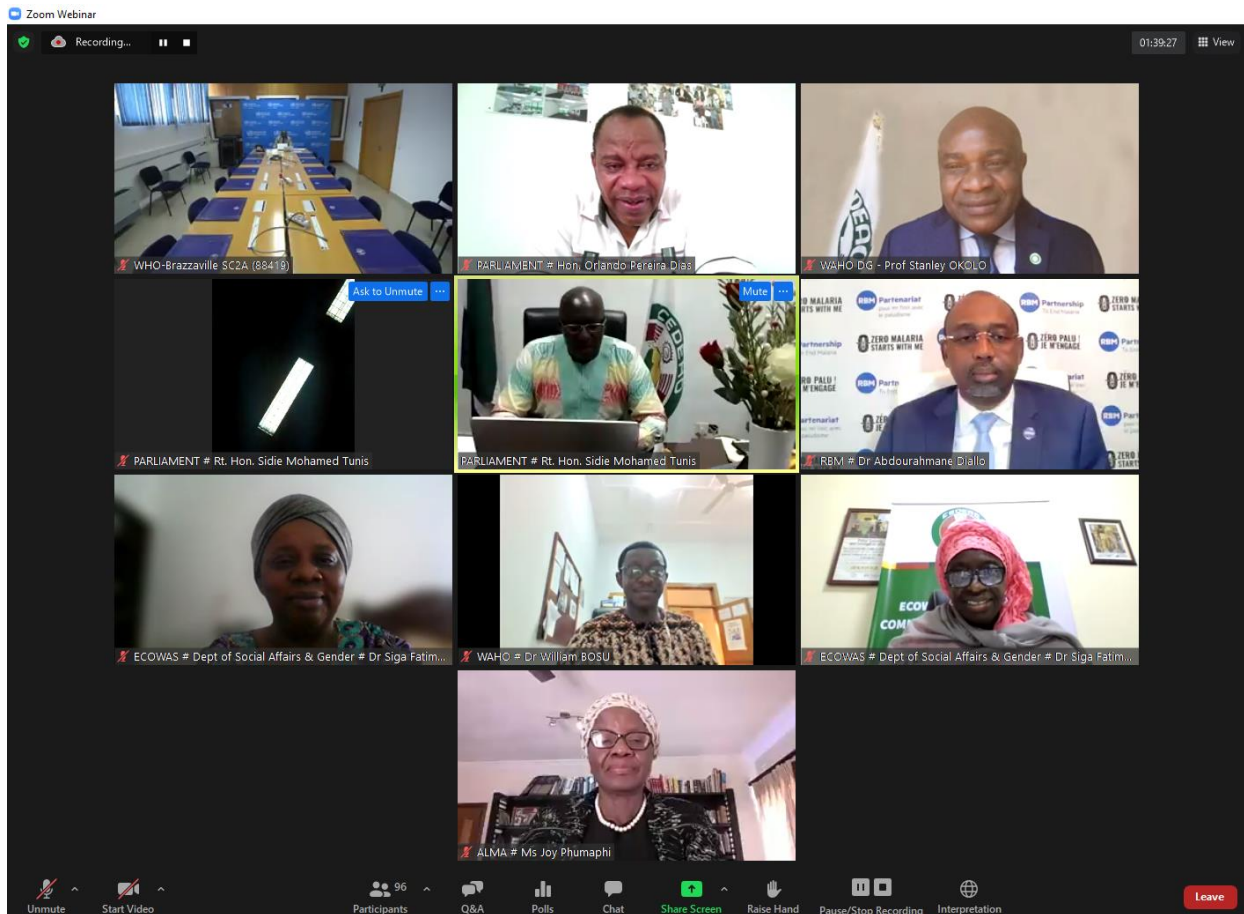
From the Abuja Declaration of 2000 through to their 2016 adoption of a catalytic framework to eliminate HIV, TB and malaria by 2030, African leaders have shown commitment to eliminating malaria. ECOWAS leaders have been similarly committed. Ministers of Health endorsed a strategic plan, in 2015, with a vision of a malaria-free ECOWAS region and in 2019, called for malaria to be incorporated in the national health agenda of Member States. Nonetheless, malaria control efforts have largely been led by the health sector with little involvement of other sectors. A lot more could be done together.

Against this background, WAHO, in collaboration with the African Leaders Malaria Alliance (ALMA) and the RBM Partnership to End Malaria, held an online high-level meeting (HLM) with the ECOWAS Parliament on 5 August 2021. The meeting sought to sensitize Parliamentarians on the burden of malaria, ongoing regional malaria initiatives as well as solicit their greater involvement in the malaria elimination agenda in their countries and in the region. There were opening remarks from Dr Benido Impouma on behalf of WHO African Office Regional Director; Dr Abdourahmane Diallo, CEO of RBM; Madam Joy Phumaphi, Executive Secretary, ALMA; and Prof Stanley Okolo, DG WAHO. The meeting was opened by the President of the ECOWAS Commission in a speech read on his behalf by DG WAHO. The HLM, which was chaired by Rt. Hon. Dr Sidie Mohamed Tunis, Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, was attended by 105 delegates comprising ECOWAS Commission, ECOWAS Member States, Development Partners, and NGOs.

There were presentations by Dr Kharchi Tfeil of WHO; Dr William K Bosu on behalf of WAHO/RBM; H.E Prof. Sheila Tlou, the ALMA Ambassador for the ECOWAS Region and Dr Siga Fatima Jagne, ECOWAS Commissioner of Social Affairs and Gender. A highpoint of the HLM was a panel discussion on “Keeping malaria high on the political agenda in the ECOWAS Region”. It involved Parliamentarians and was moderated by Prof Stanley Okolo, DG WAHO. The themes from the ensuing discussions related to resource mobilization, particularly from domestic sources; engaging the private sector; translating political commitments into concrete actions; fostering multisectoral collaboration; research; “leaving no one behind” and accountability. The unique role of Parliamentarians in advocacy, approving national budgets and health programmes, and ensuring accountability, in addition to being role models, were highlighted. The Chair of the

ECOWAS Parliamentary Committee on Health, Hon. Orlando Pereira Dias, requested that MPs be invited to participate in the ECOWAS Assembly of Health Ministers Meeting.

There was consensus that the HLM was successful and important in ensuring collaboration between the major regional institutions. The Speaker of Parliament called for the HLM to be held two or three times annually. The DG WAHO thanked the Speaker and members of ECOWAS Parliament, the ECOWAS Commissioner, Partners, Donors and Member States for their commitment and efforts at malaria elimination from the ECOWAS Region.



Group photo