



STATEMENT

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"Meeting the 2010 malaria targets will require sustained advocacy efforts"

Remarks

On the occasion of

Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid of Belgium's renewal of commitment to Roll Back Malaria until 2010

Brussels, Belgium

13 March 2009

By Professor Awa Marie Coll-Seck

Executive Director, RBM Partnership

In my capacity of Executive Director of the Roll Back Malaria Partnership, I would like to thank Princess Astrid of Belgium for accepting to serve another two years as Roll Back Malaria Special Representative (RBM).

RBM was launched in 1998 by the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the World Bank to provide a coordinated approach to the global fight against malaria. Today, it is the global public-private partnership to fight malaria.

On behalf of all Roll Back Malaria partners, I congratulate and thank Princess Astrid for her dedication to the fight against malaria.

Over the last two years, Princess Astrid's tireless efforts, and her extraordinary energy and passion in her capacity as Roll Back Malaria's first Royal Special Representative have proven to be highly beneficial to the Partnership.

Last year, to increase global support for the fight against malaria, Princess Astrid and I travelled to several malaria endemic countries in sub-Saharan Africa, usually on a very tight schedule of site visits and media briefings.

I can remember a specific occasion in the United Republic of Tanzania when Princess Astrid and I visited a primary school, bringing with us a thousand nets to hand out to the school children. I found it striking that as Princess Astrid started distributing the nets, she also began engaging in conversation with each of the children.

She carefully asked them questions and empathetically listened as they told her about how the illness causes great suffering and prevents their friends, brothers, sisters, and teachers from going to school.

It is an honour and pleasure to work with such a warm and compassionate individual (*French*). As an exceptional listener and communicator, Princess Astrid naturally fits her role as Roll Back Malaria Special Representative.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we now arrive at a critical juncture in the fight against malaria. This once-neglected disease has received unprecedented media attention and political commitment.

Today, we have more funds.

Today, we have more actors.

Today, for the first time, we have a Global Malaria Action Plan.

In September 2008, the Roll Back Malaria Partnership launched the Global Malaria Action Plan, which for the first time consolidates the input of hundreds of experts and actors. The Global Malaria Action Plan is the single global plan of action - a blueprint for success -that will help all partners to coordinate their efforts to control, eliminate, and one day, eradicate malaria. The Plan addresses short-term, medium-term, and long-term targets in the different regions of the world.

Another initiative currently underway is the Affordable Medicines Facility for Malaria or AMFm, a subsidy mechanism that will reduce the price and increase the availability of ACTs, effective antimalarials, in both the private and public sectors of malaria-endemic countries. This important new RBM initiative will be managed by the Global Fund and launched in mid-April.

Ten years ago, only \$60 million were spent to fight malaria. Last year, in 2008, this sum had increased to \$2 billion. Many countries such as Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, and Sao Tome and Principe have seen declines of more than 50% in malaria cases and deaths. Four sub-Saharan African countries have even begun taking the necessary action to eliminate the disease.

We have less than two years to fulfill our commitment of universal coverage by 2010. Less than two years to cover all populations across the globe with lifesaving malaria control prevention and treatment tools. In order to achieve such results worldwide, we need more money--about \$5 billion a year.

Mobilizing more resources to meet the 2010 malaria targets will require sustained advocacy efforts. The current global financial crisis may risk the good results of the past years. We rely on our advocates such as Princess Astrid to make a strong argument to donor countries to increase, not decrease, development assistance.

I look forward to another two years of productive work with my friend and partner Princess Astrid. Together, we will make a moral case to donor and endemic countries. It makes good economic sense to prioritize the fight against this disease and spend the small yearly sum of 5 billion US\$ to cover all populations at risk of malaria with the lifesaving commodities they need. If malaria costs Africa \$12 billion every year, \$5 billion to tackle the disease is truly a good investment.

RBM Partnership

It is why I call the international community, the private sector, foundations, and all actors to keep their past engagements; I call on new donors to join the fight against malaria and save millions of lives.

Today we have no more excuses.

We can avoid all the unnecessary deaths.