



**COVID-19 MINISTERIAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF
WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS)**

2 June 2020 (Videoconference)

FINAL COMMUNIQUE

1. In order to coordinate and strengthen the efforts undertaken in West Africa for the control of Coronavirus 2019 (Covid-19), the Coordinating Committee Meeting of the Ministers of Health of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) took place by videoconference on 2 June 2020, under the chairmanship of Dr E. Osagie EHANIRE, the Honourable Minister of Health of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
2. The meeting was as a result of the Extraordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government held on 23 April 2020, which set up Ministerial Coordination Committees on Health, Finance and Transport to support H.E. Muhammadu Buhari, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Champion designated by the ECOWAS Authority to coordinate response to the Covid-19 pandemic within the region. It is expected that the Ministerial Coordinating Committee on Health will meet regularly, at least every month to review progress on ending the pandemic.
3. The following Ministers of Health or their duly designated representatives participated in the meeting:

Dr Benjamin HOUNKPATIN - Minister of Health, Republic of Benin

Pr. Léonie Claudine LOUGUE née SORGHO - Minister of Health, Burkina Faso

Dr Arlindo Nascimento do Rosário - Minister of Health and Social Security, Cabo Verde, (represented by **Dr Monteiro Alexandre**, Minister of Trade, Industry and Energy, Cabo Verde)

Dr AKA Aouélé - Minister of Health and AIDS Control, Republic of Cote d'Ivoire

Dr Ahmadou SAMATEH - Minister of Health, Republic of The Gambia

Mr Kwaku Agyeman Manu - Minister of Health, Republic of Ghana

(represented later by **Dr Edward Okoe Boye** – Deputy Minister of Health of Ghana)

Médecin Colonel Rémy LAMAH - Minister of Health, Republic of Guinea

Dr. António Deuna - Minister of Health, Republic of Guinea Bissau

Dr Wilhemina Jallah - Minister of Health, Republic of Liberia

Dr Michel H. SIDIBE - Minister of Health, Republic of Mali

(represented by **Dr Mama COUMARE**, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health, Mali)

Dr. IDI Illiassou MAINASSARA - Minister of Health, Republic of Niger

Mr. Abdoulaye DIOUF SARR - Minister of Health & Social Security, Republic of Senegal

(represented later by **Dr Abdoulaye LY**, Technical Adviser, Republic of Senegal)

Dr Alpha Tejan Wurie - Minister of Health and Sanitation, Republic of Sierra Leone

Prof Moustafa MIJIYAWA - Minister of Health, Republic of Togo

4. The President of the ECOWAS Commission, **H.E. Jean-Claude Kassi BROU**, the ECOWAS Commissioner for Infrastructure, **Mr. Pathé GUEYE**, the ECOWAS Commissioner for Trade, Customs & Free Movement, **Mr. Konzi TEI** and the ECOWAS Commissioner for Macroeconomic Policy and Economic Research, **Dr Kofi Konadu APRAKU** also attended this meeting.
5. The West African Health Organization (WAHO) was represented by the Director-General, **Prof Stanley OKOLO** and his team of directors, professionals and experts.
6. At the opening of the meeting, the participants observed a minute's silence in memory of all ECOWAS citizens who have died as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. They expressed

their deepest condolences to the bereaved families and to the Governments of all ECOWAS Member States.

7. The Opening Ceremony featured remarks from the following dignitaries:
 - Dr E. Osagie EHANIRE, Honorable Minister of Health, Federal Republic of Nigeria
 - H.E. Jean Claude Kassi BROU, President of the ECOWAS Commission,
 - Dr. IDI Illiassou MAINASSARA, Minister of Health, Republic of Niger
 - Dr Matshidiso MOETI, Regional Director of the World Health Organization (WHO) Africa Region
 - Dr John NKENGASONG, Director of the Africa Centre for Disease Control;
8. The Ministers of Health commended the Chair of the Ministerial Coordinating Committee on Health, and the Director General of the West African Health Organization (WAHO), for organizing this meeting which gave them the opportunity to be updated on the epidemiological situation of Covid-19 in the region, to share experiences, review the approaches being used to support the ECOWAS Covid-19 Champion in his coordination efforts, and discuss strategies to mitigate impact of the pandemic on other health programmes both during and after the pandemic.
9. The Ministers were concerned that the epidemic continues to spread in the ECOWAS region, although the Member States are at different stages of evolution. They noted that as at 1 June 2020, 35,115 people had been confirmed to have Covid-19 in the Region since the first case on 27 February, of whom 56% still had active infection, 42% had recovered and 2% had unfortunately lost their lives. They observed that, despite the improved surveillance and rapid increase in testing, only about 0.11% of the population had been tested to date.
10. The Ministers commended the ECOWAS Commission and WAHO for technical and financial support to Member States in coordination, training of personnel, and financial support as well as provision of diagnostic test kits and critical medical supplies.
11. Following presentations by experts and exhaustive discussions, the Ministers agreed to:
 - i. Institute measures to mitigate the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic on the population
 - ii. Mobilize more resources to support national and regional Covid-19 response capacity
 - iii. Strengthen capacity for contact tracing, isolation & treatment
 - iv. Expand the health workforce through the use of community health workers, allied health professionals and healthcare students to assist in the public health response such as contact tracing and mitigate current shortages
 - v. Decentralise testing, surveillance & case management to the districts with professionals and volunteers deployed to support local efforts
 - vi. Develop a cross-border surveillance & management strategy for use during epidemics. The idea of designated border crossings with enhanced surveillance facilities, trained personnel, and robust data sharing platforms including smartcards should be explored.

- vii. Prioritize inclusive, contextualized and targeted risk communication that promotes adherence to public health measures while taking account of the socioeconomic situation of the population.
 - viii. Strengthen disease surveillance and management for non Covid-19 diseases. Measures such as community engagement through traditional and religious leaders to create demand, ensure provision and promote accountability should be considered.
 - ix. Ensure data driven decisions, particularly when easing lockdown. Ministers agreed that the easing of lockdown which has already started in some Member States should be data-driven, adapted to local context, and implemented gradually; that its effect on the pandemic should be evaluated after a period of about two weeks; and that lockdowns should be reapplied in the event of a resurgence in cases
 - x. Revise their current treatment strategy in view of the emerging literature on the effects of chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine in patients with Covid-19 which had necessitated suspension of the WHO clinical trial. However, Ministers charged countries that continue to use chloroquine on a compassionate basis to carefully document patient response and any adverse effects
 - xi. Encourage the evaluation of potential benefits of traditional medicines in clinical trials, including the COVID Organic product, as is being done in some countries
12. The Ministers also reflected on gradually engaging the public to come to terms with living with the virus in countries where the pandemic has reduced or stabilized, considering that the social restrictions cannot be applied indefinitely
13. The Ministers tasked WAHO, to work with the Department for Trade, Customs & Free Movement at ECOWAS Commission, and the Ministerial Coordination Committee on Transport, to come out with health-related guidelines and protocols on regional cross-border movement by air, land or sea for consideration by the Ministers. This should cover the following areas:
- a. Essential products including medicines, agricultural, food products and petroleum; commercial goods for trade and business; and passenger movements
 - b. Motor parks and loading areas for passengers and goods
 - c. Border Posts or Entry posts for international travel including air, land and sea ports
 - d. Risk communication for travellers and handlers of goods
14. The Ministers pledged their support to the Chair of the Ministerial Coordination Committee on Health and agreed to work together, exchanging data and their experiences, towards bringing the COVID-19 pandemic to an end.
15. The Ministers expressed profound gratitude to His Excellency President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria for his leadership and commitment in the regional response to Covid-19 pandemic. They thanked WHO Africa Region, Africa CDC, and Jack Ma Foundation for their technical support and provision of needed medical supplies including diagnostic tests. Ministers expressed profound appreciation to donors and partners who have contributed

significant funds to the costed regional response plan, particularly the African Development Bank, the German Government (BMZ, KFW), European Union, and France (AFD).

16. The Ministers hold themselves in readiness for the next Ministerial meeting in a month on a yet-to-be-determined date.

Done via Videoconference this 2nd Day of June 2020

For the Ministers of Health of ECOWAS,

Dr E. Osagie EHANIRE
Minister of Health of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
Chair of the ECOWAS Covid-19 Ministerial Coordinating Committee on Health