

## Statement by PAN Africa on the use of DDT in the fight against malaria in Africa

April 25, 2014

On the occasion of the World Malaria Day, celebrated every 25<sup>th</sup> of April, PAN Africa present statement to mark its inadhérence to the Stockholm Convention decision as regards DDT.

In July 2013, heads of African states and governments adopted a resolution in favor of the use of DDT in the fight against malaria in Africa. This decision is a retreat from the socio-economic and the general health situation of the continent which is unacceptable.

It is true that malaria remains a major public health problem in many tropical countries where nearly 2 billion people are exposed. The incidence of the disease in the world is estimated to 300 - 500 million clinical cases per year. In many countries malaria is endemic and is the leading cause of morbidity and mortality. The number of deaths caused by the disease vary from 1.1 to 2.7 million 90 % of which occur in sub-Saharan Africa, where about 1 million are children under 5. Malaria significantly impacts the economy of the world's poorest countries; it is also a major cause of poverty through its direct and indirect costs on family incomes and economic growth. This situation is unacceptable. It is imperative to effectively fight the disease in order to reduce the human suffering and increase production and productivity in Africa.

The insecticide Dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane (DDT), was put on the market after the Second World War. The chemical product is very stable, environmentally persistent and bio-accumulative. Its agricultural use had been banned for over forty years. In addition, extensive DDT spraying campaigns conducted in the 50s and 60s failed to eradicate malaria-transmitting mosquitoes. In 1955, the phenomena of mosquito resistance to DDT arose and was observed in Africa and by 1972 nineteen species of mosquito in the world had become resistant to the insecticide. DDT was found to be of high chronic toxicity, which means that long-term exposure can induce several health problems (breath cancer, diabetes, miscarriage, malformation in newborn, etc.). The insecticide is a Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and

is slated for elimination through the Stockholm Convention since May 2004. Currently, the product can only be used in public health with a special derogation.

There is no doubt that we must fight against the scourge of malaria. But the struggle must be conducted so as not to have negative impacts on human health and on natural resources as well as the need to protect the environment. It is amazing that we continue to advocate the use of a toxic product whose eradication had been decided upon by the entire community through the Stockholm Convention.

Indeed, many African countries have experienced very positive results in the fight against malaria without using DDT. Examples abound across the continent where effective controls leading to a significant decline of the disease have been obtained without the use of DDT. Between 2001 and 2010, the implementation of two programs in Senegal helped to reduce significantly the morbidity and mortality due to malaria. The proportional morbidity decreased from 35.72% to 3.07%. In 2009, the proportional mortality decreased from 29.72% to 4.41%. No DDT has been used at all. Furthermore, recent studies in Senegal showed resistance of malaria vectors to DDT. Examples from other African countries such as Kenya and Tanzania show that it is possible to reduce the disease morbidity and mortality rates using integrated means relying on proven environmental strategies. The scientific consensus suggests that the combination of several means acting together is the way forward in the fight against malaria. It was highlighted that the joint fight against mosquitos being vectors of malaria and other diseases can be successful with the appropriate organization of sustainable methods within a holistic Integrated Vector Management (IVM) approach: the use of mosquito nets, healthy housing, easy access to effective and cheap drugs and treatment, modification of irrigation systems and other water management systems, removal and/or treatment of larval sources and road construction.

Today, a lack of political will to make the fight against malaria and other vector borne diseases a cross cutting issues with responsibilities not just in the health sector but also for agricultural sector, house building, road construction is a large obstacle in the fight against malaria.

We call on the government who still advocate the use of DDT to initiate a multisector and multistakeholder approach in their countries, strengthen community knowledge, organization, action and integrated eco-system and communities based approaches into national and regional malaria programs.

We call on the African Union and African States with their technical and financial partners to embrace sustainable, least toxic and community based malaria control approaches instead of calling for a return to DDT whose elimination has been mandated by the international community for nearly 10 years!