



PRESS STATEMENT

EXTRA ORDINARY SADC HEALTH MINISTERS STRATEGIC MEETING ON LISTERIOSIS PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA, 15TH MARCH 2018

1. SADC Ministers of Health held an Extra Ordinary Meeting met on the 15th March 2018 on Listeriosis Preparedness and Response following the outbreak that has occurred in South Africa and potentially other countries in region.
2. Ministers noted the potential implications of the outbreak of Listeriosis in the region in terms of public health, agriculture and trade and the need regional, national and local multi-sectoral actions to mitigate it.
3. Epidemiological data has shown that in South Africa, as of 14 March 2018, a total of laboratory-confirmed cases has risen to 978, still counting from January 2017. Of these cases of 978, a total of 674 patients has been traced and 183 of them have unfortunately died. This constitutes a 27% case fatality rate.
4. Ministers agreed to cooperate with one another to:
 - i) Improve preparedness by strengthening the health systems that are essential for treating day-to-day illnesses and reducing deaths from Listeriosis outbreak;
 - ii) Improve regional active surveillance capabilities, laboratory capacity, diagnostic tools and health information systems;
 - iii) Establish mechanisms for intersectoral and multisectoral coordination and effective communication to facilitate implementation of core public health capacities, including by addressing risk management for Listeriosis outbreak;
 - iv) Establish mechanisms of coordination and collaboration among neighbouring countries to ensure implementation of core public health capacities of surveillance and response to Listeriosis outbreak, specifically those related to points of entry;

- v) Provide collaborative technical and logistical support to build and maintain their public health core capacities for the prevention, detection and response to Listeriosis in the SADC Region;
- vi) Develop and implement food control legislation and policies that are harmonized and aligned to the International Codex Alimentarius.

5. Ministers of Health also requested the World Health Organization to:

- i) Provide technical and logistical support for building and sustaining the public health core capacities for surveillance and response to Listeriosis outbreak;
- ii) Foster partnership and engagement of Member States with international organizations, such as the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations and other institutions to facilitate the prevention, detection and response to Listeriosis in the SADC Region;
- iii) Facilitate work sharing and information exchange between Member States through the IHR monitoring framework on the restricted WHO web site for National IHR Focal Points;
- iv) Monitor the progress made in the implementation of, and the sustainability in achieving, the national core capacities required for the prevention, detection and response to Listeriosis in the SADC Region.

6. In order to address the issues of Listeriosis in the Region, Ministers of Health :

- i) called upon all SADC Member States to harmonize procedures of Prevention, Detection and Response to Listeriosis in the SADC Region;
- ii) encouraged Cross Border Collaboration among Member States sharing borders with respect to Listeriosis in import of processed foods; and partnerships to strengthen inter-ministerial actions to address Listeriosis;
- iii) Called on Member States to establish mechanisms for inter-sectoral and multisectoral coordination and effective communication to facilitate implementation of core public health capacities, all hazards risk assessment approach including addressing risk management for Listeriosis outbreak;
- iv) directed the SADC Secretariat to facilitate experience sharing and information exchange between Member States;
- v) requested the support of international and regional partners like WHO to support capacity building for Member States; and
- vi) Called upon Member States to enhance strengthen control of food industries in term of compliance to food safety standards critical to Listeriosis control;
- vii) called upon Member States to enhance Public Education on Listeriosis; and enhance, upscale and strengthen enforcement of policies that are harmonized and aligned to International codex Alimentarius.