

PRESS RELEASE

The International Scientific Council for Trypanosomiasis Research and Control holds its 34th Conference to review and recommend control approaches for sleeping sickness and Nagana



Livingstone 11th September 2017. To address sleeping sickness, Nagana (trypanosomiasis in cattle) and the vector that transmits the diseases, stakeholders comprising disease control workers and scientists from AU Members States, researchers and scientists from universities in Africa and other parts of the world and other organisation working on the disease in human and animals and the tsetse fly are meeting in Livingstone Zambia to promote information sharing on the problem of tsetse, human and animal trypanosomiasis, review control strategies and recommend appropriate approaches in research and control.

The recommendations emanating from the Conference will provide new information necessary for smarter methods of tsetse and trypanosomiasis control. It is as a result of previous such Conferences that information on improving control of tsetse and trypanosomiasis has been acquired and has benefitted many countries on the continent and the world over, resulting in improved livelihoods especially of the rural communities where the problem has the highest impacts.

The threat that tsetse and trypanosomiasis (T&T) pose was recognized at the turn of the 20th century by the African Heads of State and Governments when, at their meeting in Lome in 2000, drew attention to the seriousness of the T&T problem as one of Africa's greatest constraints to socio-economic development, that severely affects human and livestock health, limits land use, cause poverty and perpetuates underdevelopment on the continent.

Trypanosomiasis (Sleeping sickness and Nagana) occurs over 10 million sq km in 38 countries, 65 million people are at risk with 2,804 human cases reported in 2015. About 50 million cattle are at risk with 35 million trypanocide doses used and 3 million deaths of cattle reported annually. Agricultural production loss due to trypanosomiasis is estimated at US\$ 5 billion per year.

The meeting is being organized under the auspices of the International Scientific Council for Trypanosomiasis Research and Control (ISCTRC) in partnership with the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock on behalf of Government of Zambia. The International Scientific Council for Trypanosomiasis Research and Control (ISCTRC) is a statutory Council of the African Union Commission with the Secretariat at the African Union Interafrican Bureau for Animal resources (AU-IBAR) in Nairobi, Kenya. It was established in 1949 as a vehicle to promote international cooperation in the fight against trypanosomiasis. The Membership of the Council includes Africa Union Member States, Africa Union Pan African Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Eradication Campaign (AU-PATTEC), International organizations, including the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Over 300 delegates are participating in this meeting and they are drawn from 31 tsetse infested AU- Member States, the African Union Commission, Universities and Research Institutes from Africa and other parts of the World, including Belgium, France, Germany, Japan and United Kingdom. The international Institutions represented in this Conference include, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the International Livestock Institute (ILRI). Other organisations include ICIPE, FIND, DNDi, GALVmed and Regional Economic Communities. The private sector is also represented in the meeting.

The meeting was officially opened by the Minister of Fisheries and Livestock, Honorable Michael Katambo on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Edgar Changwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia. In His remarks the President said that the Zambia's economy is diversifying its economy from mining to agriculture and the government, under the 7th National Development Plan is prioritizing cash crop, fisheries and livestock production, including prevention and control of Human African Trypanosomiasis (HAT), African Animal Trypanosomiasis (AAT) and eradication of tsetse flies.

He said 40 percent of Zambian land area is infested with tsetse flies that impedes livestock production and agriculture expansion and 60 percent of the countries traditional herd of cattle is at risk of infection with Trypanosomiasis and so is the population of sheep and goats.

He added that Human African Trypanosomiasis (HAT) affects over 100 people per year and there has been increased cases of HAT among tourist, therefore the government supports such initiatives like this conference and partnerships to deal with Trypanosomiasis.

In conclusion, the president said African continent is looking up to the conference for solutions on what needs to be done to eradicate trypanosomiasis in Zambia and the African continent in general.

The Director of the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture, Dr. Godfrey Bahiingwa, delivered a Key Note address entitled 'Capitalizing on the progress made against human and animal trypanosomiasis – the way forward in partnership with all stakeholders' on the Behalf of the AUC Commissioner of the Rural Economy and Agriculture Her Excellency Josepha Sacko Correa. The Commissioner elaborated past achievements on tsetse and trypanosomiasis interventions and said that the theme, the topic of the Keynote address, will afford the conference with an opportunity to focus on past achievements, challenges and lessons learnt in order to support T&T research and control activities now and in the future.

The Director of AU-IBAR, Prof Ahmed Elsayalhy elaborated on the objectives of the 34th ISCTRC Conference which are; to review, T&T, control technologies, strategies and policy options; to identify gaps in research and control and to make recommendations for T&T Research and control for the next two years. He thanked His Excellency Mr. Edgar Changwa Lungu for the commitment of his Governments in the fight against human and animal trypanosomiasis. He also thanked the Minister of Fisheries and Livestock, Hon Michael Katambo, the National Organising Committee led by the Director of Veterinary Services, Dr. Yona Sinkala for the hard work towards the Organisation of the 34th ISCTRC General Conference and the 16th PATTEC National Coordinators Meeting.

The 34th General Conference of the International Scientific Council for Trypanosomiasis Research and control (ISCTRC) and the PATTEC National Coordinators Meeting is taking place at Avani Victoria Falls Resort, Livingstone, Zambia from 11th to 15th September 2017.