



Opening Remarks by Director AUIBAR during the 2022 World Rabies Day

- **Regional Representative of Africa of the World Organization for Animal Health Dr. Karim Tounkara,**
- **Representative of FAO Regional Office for Africa Dr. Abebe Haile-Gabrie**
- **Regional Representative of WHO for Africa, Dr Matshidiso Moeti**
- **UNEP Director and Regional Representative for Africa, Dr. Juliette Biao-Koudenoukpo**
- **Ag, Director Africa CDC, Dr Ahmed E. Ogwell Ouma**
- **CEO of the Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GRAC), Prof. Louis Nel**
- **Representatives of RECS, EAC, ECCAS, ECOWAS, IGAD/ICPALD, SADC and UMA**
- **Representative from World Animal Protection Mr. Tennyson Williams**
- **CVOs/DVS of the African Union Members,**
- **Members and Experts of the United Against Rabies (UAR)**
- **Various Experts from FAO, WOAH**
- **Colleagues from Africa-CDC, AU-PANVAC and AU-IBAR**
- **Distinguished guests and participants**
- **All Protocols Observed**

Good morning

1. It is my great pleasure to welcome you all this 16th World Rabies days (WRD) 2022. On behalf of Africa Union Commission and my own behalf, I would like to take cognizant the One Health Approach under which the World Organization for Animal health, FAO, WHO, and GARC have collaboratively led the organization of this important event
2. Rabies first appeared in Africa in the late 19th century before spreading through colonial and trade routes to the rest of the continent by the early 20th century. Today, rabies is the most widespread endemic disease in Africa. The disease is estimated to cause 59000

human deaths annually in over 150 countries, with 95% of cases occurring in Africa and Asia. And over 90% of the cases of outbreaks are of canine origin, causing fatalities in both animals and humans. About 80% of human cases occur in rural areas, and over 40% of rabies deaths occur in children - primarily in boys, aged less than 15 years.

3. In Africa, the annual livestock losses attributable to rabies are approximately US\$ 280,000,000 resulting in a gross domestic product loss of US\$ 773,000,000. Rabies outbreaks in wildlife mainly originate from the Human-Animal-Wildlife Interface around national parks and during the hunting of wild animals
4. In 2015, the quadripartite of WHO, FAO and WOAH, and the Global Alliance for Rabies Control launched an *End Rabies Now* campaign to eliminate human rabies deaths by 2030 globally. In addition, they formed the United against Rabies forum in which AU-IBAR plays the critical role of providing tools to support AU MS in developing sustainable national rabies elimination plans. To support these efforts, AU-IBAR commissioned a study, concluded last month, to understand the continent's preparedness to achieve the *End Rabies Now* campaign aspirations and inform the development of a continental rabies elimination strategy. The aim of the study was to inform and guide the development of a comprehensive continental strategy towards the global elimination of Rabies by 2030. The findings of this study, which will inform the Continental Rabies Strategy, will be presented to this audience today.
5. AU-IBAR will continue to partner with MSs and RECs to develop and implement their national and regional Rabies Elimination strategic plans and I quote a few examples Guinea Conakry in 2012, Kenya in 2015, Cote d'Ivoire in 2016, RAHC-ECOWAS in 2020 and recently Nigeria this September 2022.
6. **Ladies and Gentlemen**, the theme for the WRD in 2022, is "**One Health, Zero Deaths.**" This calls for a strong political will, adequate resources and a diligently integrated programme management approach at the Human-Animal-Environment Interface. Indeed, since the introduction of World Rabies Day by GARC in 2007, there has been tremendous progress in building global public awareness and partnership about rabies prevention, control and elimination. However, rabies remains a neglected disease and so it continues to constrain efforts to improve animal resources, public health, livelihoods, environment and sustainable development in Africa.

7. **Ladies and Gentlemen**, it is with great pleasure that I report to you that the AU-IBAR, upon the request of the AU Member States during the African Animal Welfare Conference held in Addis Ababa in 2019, led the initiative that culminated in the March 2022 adoption of the UNEA Resolution on the Nexus between Animal Welfare, the Environment and Sustainable Development. We are very grateful for the technical and financial support for the epic achievement, provided to us by our partners such as the Animal Welfare Organizations with activities in Africa. This Resolution will enhance the One Health Approach to tackle issues that arise out of the Human-Animal-Environmental Interface like rabies. Indeed, the One Health Approach is key to eradicate this deadly disease.
8. **Ladies and gentlemen**, the prevention, control and elimination of human rabies is inextricably dependent upon the effective prevention, control and elimination of canine rabies. The African Union Commission through its specialized technical institutions, namely the AU-IBAR, the AU-PANVAC and the Africa-CDC would like to, at this 16th WRD, call upon all the national, regional, and international partners, as well as the donor community and other relevant stakeholders, to provide financial support and other resources for this initiative
9. **Ladies and gentlemen**, we also, within the spirit of implementing the One Health Approach, call upon all relevant actors, to increase advocacy efforts within countries and regions, and to mobilise technical and financial support for the elimination of rabies, leveraging the coordination platforms under AU-IBAR, Africa CDC, UAR, FAO, WHO and WOAH.
10. An event like this World Rabies Day is a good platform for enhanced advocacy and sensitization. It is our hope that in future World Rabies Day Celebrations, we will be reporting success stories towards our vision for Rabies-Free-Continent by 2030.

With these remarks, I welcome you to this year's celebrations.

Viva the International Cooperation! God Bless you All!

Dr. Nick Nwankpa, Ag. Director AU-IBAR