

**Building stronger collaborations across sectors to foster early detection of health risks,
information exchange and preparedness on the continent**

**KEY NOTE SPEECH BY DR HUYAM SALIH
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Representatives of the Government of Rwanda

**Representatives from the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) of the
African Union**

**Representatives of International, Continental, regional and national Public
health, Animal Health and Human Health organizations,**

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen

All Protocols Observed

1. On behalf of the Commissioner of Agriculture, Rural Development and Blue Economy and Sustainable Development (ARBE) of the African Union Commission, Her Excellency Ambassador Josefa Sacko, I hereby convey her heartfelt greetings and deep gratitude to the host country, Rwanda for hosting the Africa Health Tech Summit 2023.

Distinguished participants

2. Africa bears a heavy burden of Transboundary animal diseases including zoonoses. Twelve (12) of the 15 major TADs & zoonoses occur in the African continent. Most of the zoonoses such as Rabies, Rift Valley Fever, Anthrax,

Brucellosis and Tuberculosis are endemic in most of the African Countries. In addition, over the last decade, 63% increase of diseases spread from animals to people in Africa has been observed. Given the high burden of zoonoses in the continent, there is a need to improve disease data and information systems to support disease detection, preparedness, response and disease risk-assessment. This can only be achieved through collaborations and co-ordination across sectors to provide a holistic view of data and information related to zoonoses and their risk factors.

Ladies and gentlemen

3. However, the continent is faced with various challenges that hinder early disease detection and response nationally and regionally and they include inadequate public veterinarians and para-veterinarians especially with digital skills; low levels of disease reporting by Member States; inadequate capacities for disease detection and response; low level of utilization of data driven technologies; inadequate collaboration between the different sectors and inaccessible and remote areas and use of disease intelligence systems.
4. Therefore, today's session's theme: *From Detection to Action: Optimizing Africa's Disease Intelligence Systems for stronger pandemic preparedness* allows us as a continent to reflect and gain insights on various tangible solutions for improved preparedness and response.
5. The African Union InterAfrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) is in the fore front in supporting improvements of national and regional disease surveillance systems through;
 - a. Building technical capacities on data collection, data collation, data analysis and dissemination of information through the **Animal Resources Information System – ARIS**. This is a platform that supports sharing of animal health data with member states including disease occurrence and control;

- b. **Promoting Community-based surveillance** to improve early detection and notification; and response to disease outbreaks by leveraging the capacity of community members to carry out surveillance activities within their communities.
 - c. **Strengthening co-ordination mechanisms** including regional animal health networks (RAHNs), regional animal health centres (RAHCs), participating in the activities of the Global Framework for Transboundary Animal Diseases for Africa (GF-TADs Africa) and the Africa One health Network (AfOHNET)
 - d. **Generation of knowledge and information products such as the animal Resources Year book** to provide information of disease status and trends amongst others
6. In conclusion and going forward, AU-IBAR will **continue** to;
- a. **Build capacities for disease surveillance** for AU Member States;
 - b. **Promote collaborations and partnerships** that will be focussed on data integration, harmonization and dissemination through development of continental and regional platforms;
 - c. **Develop of core competencies and profiles** necessary to strengthen uptake and utilization of data driven technologies that will be critical in addressing some of the challenges I spoke about earlier;
 - d. **Support development of appropriate policy frameworks and guidelines** that will support collaborative animal information systems;
 - e. **Support strengthening of capacities for animal disease intelligence systems** through consolidation of ARIS data, widening the scope of relevant sources of animal health information in order to meet the needs of varied stakeholders.
 - f. **Strengthen Public and Private partnerships** with new partners and existing partners to promote targeted investments for digitalized disease detection, preparedness and response

Thank you for your kind attention