

ARTEMISININ CONFERENCE 2013
Opening Plenary Address by Dr Fatoumata Nafo- Traoré
Executive Director, Roll Back Malaria Partnership
Monday 14 January | Nairobi Kenya

Dr Willis Akhwale, Head of the Disease Prevention and Control Department of the Ministry of Public Health and Sanitation,
Dear Colleagues and friends,

It is with real pleasure and ... some emotion that on my turn I am welcoming you all here on behalf of the Roll Back Malaria Partnership, UNITAID, the Global Fund and WHO to the 7th Edition of the International Artemisinin Conference.

I am so proud to see the progress and achievements made by the group since 2005 when I was with you at the first conference in the neighbouring town of Arusha at the initiative of WHO and MMV.

Since those years the Artemisinin Conference has matured, in size and even more in quality and expertise, fostering coordination between all the key actors involved in the ACT – artemisinin supply chain. I am glad to see that the Global Fund and UNITAID have not only joined this meeting but have also become co-sponsors. This conference has become an important platform for information sharing and consensus building for the global availability of quality-assured ACTs in sufficient quantities to meet the demand from the countries burdened by malaria. And I wish to thank and congratulate you all for this with a particular mention to our Chair Malcolm Cutler and his devoted assistant Jill.

But my thanks and congratulations to you are due for much more than your involvement in this conference. They are meant in particular for all those of you working behind the scenes: those struggling to grow Artemisia, extract the artemisinin and purify it, those seeking and developing the technologies for better efficiencies, those roving the continents to purchase the artemisinin to make the APIs and the ACTs; and those roving the world to liaise between all of you, to gather and build intelligence about the artemisinin market, such as Jacques Pilloy, who seems to ignore the meaning of the word retirement.

Aligning global demand and supply is always a challenge in new markets. As you know this market is quite special: it is mainly donor driven with its related constraints including many rules and procedures, delays and uncertainties.

This makes forecasting beyond one year less reliable, while the ACT market would require at least two year forecasts. Twice since 2004 we have seen demand exceeding the supply, leading to a peak in the price, followed by massive production, and supply now exceeding demand, with a fall of the price. Such as today with a price of 370 – 380 dollar per kilo. There are reasons for concern, even if the fall is not as low as 120 in 2007. There is a great need to improve the forecasts and agree on policies to stabilize the market.

After the first peak there was a strong call for accelerating the research for semi-synthetic artemisinin; and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has made it possible in collaboration with different partners from research and development, the University of Berkeley, Amyris and Sanofi. We are looking forward to have more clarity today about the timelines, price and volumes of the introduction of semi-synthetic artemisinin. This conference has proven a forum where information could be shared even if sometimes very strategic. Let us hope that your discussions tomorrow will pave the way for a proper planning and introduction of this new source leading to more stability in supply and prices.

Another reason of concern is the development of resistance of the parasite to artemisinin mainly in the greater Mekong region. WHO and RBM Partners are striving to implement the GPARC, the Global Plan for Artemisinin Resistance Containment. Andrea Bosman will definitely give us the latest developments and the efforts being made.

In times when funding and predictability were much lower this group has achieved a unique scale up of a new drug: from a few millions in 2004 to around 300 million in 2012. Early 2012 the billionth ACT had been delivered, with half a billion ACTs delivered in the last two years. There is no doubt that this group and their partners will work their way successfully through today's challenges.

The Roll Back Malaria Partnership, including the donors, are very sensitive to the concerns raised and remain vigilant and committed to ensuring access to quality, effective and affordable medicines. Being the only class of drugs available for malaria control all possible efforts should be made to protect this market while investing in research for new tools.

Learning from the AMFm that has proven its capacity to increase access through the private sector, the Global Fund will now integrate it in its regular process with the possible inclusion of RDTs.

We are looking forward to share the lessons learnt from the AMFm with all countries, to compile and disseminate best practices for the roll-out and use of RDTs in the private sector with all appropriate mechanisms.

I can assure you that the Roll Back Malaria Partnership will continue its support to this conference as the strategic information platform on artemisinin supply and demand.

On behalf of the conference organizers I am grateful for the hope you bring to the countries who rely on our coordinated effort to ensure an effective global supply of ACTs.

Thank you.