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PRESS RELEASE

REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION AFRICAN REGION, DR. LUIS GOMES SAMBO VISITS ZAMBIA

25th October, 2010

LUSAKA- The Regional Director for the World Health Organization, African Region, Dr. Luis Gomes Sambo arrived in Lusaka today for an official visit at the invitation of the Government of the Republic of Zambia. He is visiting the country from 25th to 28th October, 2010. Dr. Sambo was met at the Lusaka international airport by the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Health Dr. Peter Mwaba, and other senior government officials, the WHO Representative, Dr. Olusegun Babaniyi and staff from the WHO Country Office. Dr. Sambo is accompanied on this visit by Dr. George Ki-Zerbo, Regional Advisor for Malaria, Dr. Triphonie Nkurunzina, Regional Advisor for Making Pregnancy Safer and Dr. Deo Nshimirimana, Regional Advisor for the Expanded Programme on Immunisation.

Dr. Mwaba welcomed Dr. Sambo to Zambia on behalf of government. He said that the government was greatly honoured to have the Regional Director of the World Health Organization in the country to see the progress the country has made in the health sector and to hold consultations with government on how best to address the challenges that were faced in the delivery of health care.

Dr. Sambo said he was happy to have the opportunity to visit Zambia and that he was looking forward to meeting relevant government authorities and health workers particularly to familiarise himself with various health developments in the country. He stated that Zambia had made notable progress towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) particularly the reduction of child and maternal mortality and malaria control. He said that there was need to accelerate further the efforts targeted at the attainment of MDGs. Dr. Sambo said that during his visit he would hold discussions with government on how the World Health Organization could contribute further to help the government realise better health for all its citizens.

Dr. Sambo met the Republican President, His Excellency, Rupiah Bwezani Banda at State House. The President welcomed Dr. Sambo to Zambia and thanked WHO for the support it had continued to provide to government for health development. He urged WHO to continue supporting health programmes in the country in the country for better health of the citizens.

The Regional Director visited the WHO Country Office where he held a meeting with the staff. Dr. Sambo recognised the positive results which were realised as a result of the good partnership which existed between government and the WHO Country Office. He however emphasised the need for the WHO Country Office to be responsive to the current health challenges in the country particularly the human resources crisis, maternal and child health and non communicable diseases. He emphasised the need to integrate health promotion in all priority health programmes. He called upon the WHO Country Office to provide the necessary leadership in the health sector through provision of norms, standards and guidelines and resource mobilisation in order to improve the delivery of quality health services. He said that there was need for WHO to collaborate and support government in developing the National Health Strategic Plan in order to ensure that the key strategies adopted by the WHO Regional Committee were integrated.

Dr. Sambo visited Chongwe, a rural district outside Lusaka where he launched the 2010 Zambia National Protocol Guidelines for Integrated Prevention of Mother to Child transmission of HIV at the District Medical Office. He was welcomed to the District by Dr. Victor Mukonka, the Director of Research and Public Health at Ministry of Health. Dr. Mukonka thanked Dr. Sambo for the work WHO was undertaking to put Primary Health Care on top of the Health development agenda in Africa. He said that Zambia was implementing community based activities which had led to tremendous improvements in health particularly reduction in morbidity and mortality rates in TB, Malaria and HIV and AIDS.

In his statement to officially launch the PMTCT guidelines, Dr. Sambo stated that countries in Sub-Sahara Africa had high rates of HIV infection among pregnant women and that this situation made the reduction of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV one of the priorities of WHO. He recognized the tremendous efforts Zambia had made in reducing infant and maternal mortality and emphasized the need for concerted effort towards the attainment of MDGs 4 and 5 targeted at reducing child and maternal deaths. He also emphasized the need for countries to take the opportunity of the renewed focus on primary health care to redesign national health systems in order to improve health care services. He said that the PMTCT guidelines were an important milestone as they provided evidence-based practical guidance for building capacity of health providers in order to ensure quality prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV services. He assured the government of WHO's continued support to the country in the implementation of priority health programmes.

During this visit Dr. Sambo is expected to travel to Ndola, on the Copperbelt Province where he will commission the cold chain facility for the Expanded Programme on Immunisation at the Provincial Medical Office. The cold chain facility has been provided by the World Health Organization at the cost of 130,000 United States Dollars. He will also visit the Tropical Diseases Research Centre and the site for the new medical school.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE VISIT TO ZAMBIA
BY
DR. LUIS GOMES SAMBO, REGIONAL DIRECTOR,
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, AFRICAN REGION**

Monday, 25th October, 2010



Dr. Luis G. Sambo (left) upon arrival at the Lusaka International Airport, with WHO Representative, Dr. Olusegun Babaniyi and the Permanent Secretary, MOH, Dr. Peter Mwaba (far right).



Above: Dr. Luis G. Sambo meets senior government officials, shaking hands with Dr. Victor Mukonka, Director of Public Health and Research, MOH,

Right: Dr. Luis G. Sambo meets with staff from the WHO Country Office.

Below (right): Dr. Luis G. Sambo (Centre) held a media briefing soon after arrival at the airport. On the left is the WHO Representative, Dr. Olusegun Babaniyi and on the right is the Permanent Secretary, MOH, Dr. Peter Mwaba. (right)





Dr. Luis G. Sambo's meeting with the WHO Representative, Dr. Olusegun Babaniyi at the WHO Country Office

The WHO Staff Association representative Mutembo Siboonde handing over a gift from WHO staff to Dr. Sambo



Dr. Sambo with the staff at the WHO Country Office

DR. SAMBO'S VISIT TO CHONGWE DISTRICT



Dr. Sambo was taken on a guided tour of the Laboratory, the Pharmacy and the Maternal and Child Health Unit at Chongwe Rural Health Centre.

Dr. Sambo launched the Zambia National Protocol Guidelines for Integrated Prevention of Mother to Child transmission in Chongwe District



Above right: Dr. Sambo donated bicycles to community health workers

Above: left Dr. Sambo donated insecticide treated mosquito nets to pregnant women

Below left: Dr. Victor Mukonka, Director, Public Health and Research, Ministry of Health welcomed Dr. Sambo to Chongwe District to see the Primary Health Care activities which were being implemented in partnership with the communities.