

**SPEECH PRESENTED ON BEHALF OF HIS
EXCELLENCY,
DR. JEAN PING, THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION, BY THE DIRECTORS
OF THE AFRICAN UNION-INTERAFRICAN BUREAU
FOR ANIMAL RESOURCES (AU-IBAR) AND THE
AFRICAN UNION-PAN AFRICAN VACCINE CENTRE
(AU-PANVAC)**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE SIDE EVENT MAKING
THE GLOBAL ERADICATION OF RINDERPEST DURING
THE IAEA'S 55TH GENERAL CONFERENCE ON THE
20TH SEPTEMBER 2011, VIENNA, AUSTRIA.**

***Your Excellency YUKIYA AMANO Director General of
the International Atomic Energy Agency***

**H.E. Dr. Jean Ping the Chairperson of African Union
most sincerely thank You for the invitation extended
to Him to attend this important event organized by the
International Atomic Energy Agency marking the
celebration of the Global eradication of Rinderpest. He
sends his apologies for not being able to come; he
would have loved to be here personally but for very
unavoidable prior engagements.**

Your Excellency Director General of IAEA

***Your Excellency Ann Tutwiler Deputy Director General
of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United
Nations (FAO)***

***Your Excellency Dr Bernard Vallat Director general of
the World Organization for Animal Health***

Excellencies Ambassadors

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of H.E. Dr. Jean PING, The Chairperson of African Union Commission and H.E. Mme Tumusiime Rhoda Peace The Commissioner for the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture, It is my Privilege and Honour (and that of the Director of AU-PANVAC) to represent the Chairperson at this event marking the celebration of Freedom from the World's greatest animal scourge named Rinderpest. I congratulate the IAEA and all partners for this monumental achievement.

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Excellencies

It is gratifying to note that we are gathered here today to mark the eradication of a disease which has caused havoc among livestock communities the World over. This particular event is indeed a special one not just because this is the first devastating animal viral disease to be eradicated globally and only the second disease of mankind to be eradicated; but most importantly because of the very significant and critical role the IAEA played in this great achievement.

It is in recognition of this great role that all partners and stakeholders who contributed in the realization of this monumental achievement, join the IAEA in this celebration in support and appreciation.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

Rinderpest was first introduced to Africa in the 19th Century and it is estimated to have killed over 230 million cattle. The Rinderpest epidemic alone in the early 80's in Africa is estimated to have caused direct losses amounting to US\$400-500 million while the economies of the affected countries suffered indirect losses equivalent to more than US\$ 1 billion.

Rinderpest constituted an important setback to livestock economies by preventing the majority of African countries from getting access to highly profitable markets due to the imposition of non-tariff trade barriers by importing countries. As a consequence, the eradication of this disease will definitely result in a marked improvement in the livelihoods of millions of rural Africans.

The efforts to control Rinderpest in Africa began in 1951 with the establishment of the Inter African Bureau of Epizootic Diseases (the current Inter African Bureau for Animal Resources of African Union AU/IBAR) with the mandate to eliminate Rinderpest from Egypt and Sub-Saharan Africa, where continual east-west cattle movements prevented effective control by individual countries.

In 1961 The Heads of African Veterinary Services in Kano agreed to launch a multinational Joint Project known as JP 15 aimed at eradicating Rinderpest, under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity. The JP - 15 operation in 22 African countries substantially reduced the incidence of the disease and thus cattle mortality but was not able to eradicate the disease.

It was therefore not surprising that a major resurgence and spread of Rinderpest in many African

countries occurred in the early 80's leading up to US\$ 100 million in direct losses and more than US\$ 1 billion in indirect losses. This prompted the African Heads of State and Governments to instruct the Inter African Bureau for Animal Resources to take necessary actions to control the epidemic. IBAR subsequently responded by setting up the Pan African Rinderpest Campaign (PARC) with financial support from European Union (as the largest donor) to control and ultimately eradicate Rinderpest and other epidemic diseases from Africa and also to revitalize the animal health services. The IAEA then served as the major source of Technical support to PARC's post-vaccination disease monitoring.

Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen

It was then recognized that the success of the PARC programme would heavily depend on the availability of GOOD QUALITY VACCINES. But a survey conducted by FAO in 1983 indicated that the quality of Rinderpest vaccine that was then being produced by 11 laboratories in Africa had serious deficits in quality control tests performed. As a result, the FAO Expert Consultative group on Rinderpest (Rome, October

1984), urged all vaccine producing laboratories to participate in the implementation of an international and independent vaccine quality control scheme. The FAO responded to this recommendation by establishing in 1986, through its Technical cooperation Programme Two Regional Vaccine quality Control and Training Centres, in DebreZeit (Ethiopia) and Dakar (Senegal), dedicated to improve the quality of the rinderpest vaccine produced in Africa. This initiative was carried out from 1988 to 1993, by a UNDP funding which resulted in the merger of the 2 centres as single project which became the Pan African Veterinary Vaccine Centre (PANVAC).

PARC project was a two-pronged effort combining regional activities through a coordination Unit and national projects in 35 participating countries. The EU provided the bulk of the funding (115 Million Euros from EDF 6 and 7) and more than 120 million of cattle were vaccinated during that project.

As a follow up to PARC which ended in 1999, a new programme, known as the Pan African Programme for the Control of Epizootics (PACE), was in launched and ran from 2000 to 2006 and provided the disease surveillance data that was required for countries to

provide the information to OIE that would allow recognition of their status of rinderpest-free.

Despite the successes of PACE, there were concerns that residual foci of rinderpest may have remained in the Somali ecosystem. To address these concerns The Somali Ecosystem Rinderpest Eradication Coordination Unit (SERECU) was established from 2006 to 2010 to ensure that Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia the three countries of the Somali ecosystem attained internationally recognized rinderpest freedom.

Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen

It is internationally recognised that it was the Technical support provided by IAEA that was critical and major determinant of the success of the Rinderpest eradication. The implementation of various Coordinated Research Programmes for the Seromonitoring of Rinderpest throughout Africa and the Technical Cooperation Projects especially RAF/5/043, RAF/5/053, (RAF/5/055) and RAF/5/057 and many others are documented evidences of the pivotal role the IAEA has played in support of Transboundary disease eradication efforts around the world.

The Rinderpest Laboratory Network established by the International Atomic Energy Agency proved the ideal vehicle for technology transfer. Annual coordination meetings which were linked to training courses in diagnostic techniques, software programs or epidemiological strategies where project holders eventually became experts in their own right and proliferated these technologies to other countries was a major tool in the eradication efforts.

Certainly, the significance of Rinderpest eradication especially as it relates to global food security, enhancement and protection of rural livelihoods, increased international trade, and the protection of wildlife cannot be overemphasized. We should however not be carried away by the euphoria of this great achievement. Today, sadly to say, that the development of the African livestock sector is still seriously constrained by the burden of other infectious animal diseases such as Peste des Petite Ruminants (PPR), Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia, Rift Valley Fever, Foot and Mouth Disease. The dramatic increase in international travel and trade in recent years have provided opportunities for diseases to spread across geo-ecological and

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international boundaries. All this is happening against the backdrop of climate change and global warming, increased poverty, global economic crisis. It is therefore very important to maintain and sustain this great achievement by ensuring that just as Small pox, Rinderpest is kept off the streets for good. In ensuring this, I would also like to inform you that the Ministers responsible for Animal Health in Africa recommended all Member States to destroy all Rinderpest virus strains held in Africa and to hand over what is deemed necessary to AU-PANVAC for safe storage in its Biosafety Level 3 laboratory.

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I therefore call on all of you, partners and stakeholders particularly the IAEA to be conscious of the realities and consequences of a Rinderpest recurrence and the potential threats of other pandemics due to globalization. I enjoin all stakeholders to continue to be vigilant in order for the world to sustain this freedom from Rinderpest and to design appropriate framework and strategies for a comprehensive global transboundary animal disease control.

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Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen

I wish to conclude by calling on the whole world; International partners and friends to join the African Union in congratulating the IAEA for its immense contributions to the achievement of this great feat and to congratulate every one of you for your various contributions to the successful eradication of Rinderpest from our world.

I thank you.