



10th African
Conference on One
Health and Biosecurity



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COMMUNIQUE OF THE 10TH AFRICAN CONFERENCE ON ONE HEALTH AND BIOSECURITY

Theme: From Ebola to COVID-19 and Beyond: Strengthening Africa's
Capacity to Address Emerging Global Health Security Threats



6th - 7th November, 2024



Lagos Oriental Hotel, Nigeria



Global
Emerging Pathogens
Treatment Consortium

In collaboration
with



Lagos State
Ministry of Health

PREAMBLE

The 10th African Conference on One Health and Biosecurity, themed From Ebola to COVID-19 and Beyond: “Strengthening Africa’s Capacity to Address Emerging Global Health Security Threats,” was held Wednesday, 6th and Thursday, 7th November 2024, at the Orientals Hotel, Victoria Island, Lagos Nigeria. The 10th edition of the annual conference was organized by the Global Emerging Pathogens Treatment Consortium (GET) and the Lagos State Ministry of Health, focusing on Strengthening Africa’s Capacity to Address Emerging Global Health Security Threats. The 2-day conference provided a unique forum for robust interactions to take stock of the advancements made in strengthening our capacity to respond to health threats, identify gaps in our system in comparison to international standards, and take future-focused steps towards bridging the identified gaps to bolster our capacity to respond to any future public health emergencies. The conference, attended by professionals, members of academia, top government officials (both locally and internationally), financial experts, Students, and other stakeholders across the different sectors of society, received presentations from resource persons cutting across the health, agriculture, environment and financial sectors, as well as from the development sector and civil society.

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

The conference's main objective is to critically review Africa's preparedness and response mechanisms to past disease outbreaks, understand where we are in our preparedness, and plan for the future together. The conference brought together policymakers, public health experts, researchers, and international partners to reflect on lessons learned from recent outbreaks such as Ebola and COVID-19. It aims to evaluate how these experiences can inform strategies to build a more resilient health system capable of addressing global health threats.

To explore innovations in disease surveillance, early warning systems, and rapid response measures with a focus on strengthening Africa's capacity to prevent, detect and respond to future outbreaks. This includes addressing critical gaps in public health infrastructure, integrating technology and data systems and fostering intersectoral collaboration across borders.

INTRODUCTION

1. The 10th African Conference on One Health and Biosecurity was held at the Oriental Hotel Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria, from 6th – 7th November 2024.
2. The delegations from various African countries were present (both onsite and virtually) for the landmark event.
3. Among the participants were representatives from Collaborating partners here listed: Lagos State Government, Lagos State Executive Council, Federal Road Safety Corp, Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corp, Lagos state Command, Nigerian Navy, Fidelity Bank, Lagos State Ministry of Health, Nigeria Institute of Medical Research – NIMR; Sterling Bank, Nigeria Centre for Disease Control – NCDC; Central bank of Nigeria – CBN; Lagos State Ministry of Environment and Water Resources, - LSME&WR; University of Lagos – UNILAG; David Umahi Federal University of Health Sciences – DUFUHS; South Africa Medical Research Council – SAMRC; Lagos State Environmental Protection Agency – LASEPA; Policy consulting LLC; West African Health Organization – WAHO; Africa CDC; National Biotechnology Management Agency – NBMA; United Nations Office of Chemical, Biological, Radioactive and Nuclear - UN-CBRN; Lagos BioBank; Stellenbosch University, South Africa - SU, Eclat Healthcare, Lagos University Teaching Hospital - LUTH, US Homeland Security, United Nations Office of Disarmament - UNODA, Canadian Institute of Health Research - CIHR, Imo State University, Owerri – IMSU, University of West Indies, Barbados – UWI, Nigeria Porth Health Service, NPHS, mDoc Healthcare, Babcock University - BU, Covenant University - CU, Lagos State University - LASU; Autogon AI, International Federation of Biosafety Association - Equity Focused Coordinating Committee, - IFBA-ECC; iGEM Community SynthAfrica Project, World Organization for Animal Health – WOA; Pasteur Institute, Dakar; and Nigerian Army, Nigeria Police Force, Optimus AI Labs. About 600 virtual and in-person participants from over 18 countries attended the conference.

PRESENTATIONS AND DELIBERATIONS

DAY ONE

Conference Opening Session

The 10th African Conference on One Health and Biosecurity commenced with a welcome address by the Chief Operating Officer of the Global Emerging Pathogen and Treatment Consortium (GET), Dr. Ayodotun Bobadoye. In his address, he reviewed the impact of the previous nine conferences. The Chief host and Hon. Commissioner for Health, Prof. Akin Abayomi, delivered a thought-provoking opening remark that centred on the need for an integrated One Health and Biosecurity approach, where he highlighted the significance of this year's theme: "Strengthening Africa's Capacity to Address Emerging Global Health Security Threats" reminding the participants that we are under constant threats and the need to prepare for an outbreak or biological shocks. He further stated that increasing contact between humans and animals increases the risk of zoonosis. He explained that science has only been able to characterize less than 2% of the zoonotic viruses, which means that over 98% of vertebrate viruses can potentially cause a severe public health issue like COVID-19.

The conference goodwill message was delivered (pre-recorded) by the eloquent Former Governor of Lagos State, His Excellency Barr. Babatunde Fashola, SAN, CON, on the need to continue to adopt the lessons learned from Ebola and COVID. Several short presentations were delivered by guests and top government functionaries (from the federal and state governments). They all emphasized the importance of the GET conference to the state and the country at large. In his speech, the Governor of Lagos State HE, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu, ably represented by Deputy Governor Dr. Babafemi Hamzat, emphasized the need for continued collaboration, capacity development, research, and quality data gathering.

The conference progresses with very impactful lectures, panel discussions and abstract presentations from other guests and presenters. Discussions were focused on Biosecurity and infectious disease outbreaks, Antimicrobial Resistance, financial partnership, Gaps in national biosecurity strategies, Data

generation and sharing during outbreaks, Building a Robust Smart Health Information Platform (SHIP) in Lagos, Biosecurity and Biobanking Policy, Mitigating outbreak with strategic environmental interventions, Linking Health security to economic stability, and Epidemic Intelligence.

DAY TWO

Day two of the 10th GET Conference began with a special session themed "Health Systems Strengthening: Strategy and Policy, Role of Government with very vital presentations." HE Mr. Babatunde Raji Fashola, the Former Governor of Lagos State, chaired the session.

There were presentations on Biosecurity, Lagos Biosecurity Policy, Biosecurity and Biosafety in Africa, lessons from COVID-19 and Ebola, Strengthening Health Research in Africa, Strengthening Biosecurity in Africa, Understanding and Strengthening Biosecurity in resource limiting setting, Strengthening Health Systems – the Lagos Story, The Critical Role of Data Generation and sharing in Managing Outbreaks, Partnership during Disease Outbreak - The role of Financial Institutions, Strategic approach to Retaining Health Professionals in Africa, Strengthening Entry Points for Effective Disease Surveillance, Strengthening Environmental Systems to Mitigate Disease Outbreak, Lagos State Biobanking Project and contribution to all the topic discussed by the special guest HE Barr. Babatunde Raji Fashola, the former Governor of Lagos State. While speaking, he highlighted the need for preparedness "that there will be more epidemics and pandemics," and significant attention should be given to pandemics, especially those of Zoonotic origin, as the majority of us now keep pets and known pathogen reservoirs such as bats have invaded human spaces. Hence, the a need for education and improved sanitation exercises, as infectious agents thrive better in dirty environments.



He recommended the need for the following:

- Awareness creation and encouraging regular and quality sanitation exercises
- Improved human and animal surveillance to prevent zoonotic diseases
- Strengthen the Biowaste Management Strategy (wastes from labs and hospitals).
- Promote local production of basic infection prevention materials to boost our economy.
- Investment in tailored biomedical research that solves National problems.

CONFERENCE DECLARATION

The 10th African Conference on One Health and Biosecurity, jointly organized by the Global Emerging Pathogens Treatment Consortium (GET) and the Lagos State Ministry of Health, is critical for Africa's health security. Under the theme "From Ebola to COVID-19 and Beyond: Strengthening Africa's Capacity to Address Emerging Global Health Security Threats," this conference aims to address Africa's evolving health challenges and highlight the importance of building a resilient health security framework. The conference brings together experts, policymakers, and practitioners from multiple sectors to assess Africa's progress in health security and discuss policies, strategies and innovative approaches to strengthen health security in Africa. Recent health crises, from the Ebola outbreak to the COVID-19 pandemic, have revealed vulnerabilities within African health infrastructures but have also shown the continent's resilience. Drawing on lessons learned, we seek to move towards a future where Africa is prepared for any health emergency. Through investments in early warning systems, disease surveillance, biomedical research, and cross-border partnerships, Africa can bolster its capacity to protect the health and well-being of its people.

To strengthen Africa's Capacity to Address Emerging Global Health Security Threats, the Conference Declarations are as follows:



1. Investing in Biomedical Research and Infrastructure

There is a need for increased investment in research and development. The government should prioritize sustainable funding for Africa-focused biomedical research and infrastructure. This involves developing regional biomedical research hubs, securing diversified funding sources, and encouraging public-private partnerships to support ongoing innovation. By nurturing local research capacity, Africa can address its unique health challenges and become less dependent on foreign funding for critical health initiatives.

2. Enhancing Disease Surveillance and Early Warning Systems

Call for establishing a unified, cross-border disease surveillance system that utilizes Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital tools to identify and respond to potential health threats. This system would integrate animal and human health data to ensure timely detection and response to outbreaks. Enhanced disease surveillance would be achieved by expanding technology access, training personnel, and fostering collaboration across African borders.

3. Strengthening Health Workforce Retention and Development

There is a need to design strategies to retain skilled healthcare professionals within Africa by improving compensation, providing opportunities for professional growth, and creating conducive work environments. Strategies should focus on reducing the migration of healthcare workers, mainly through incentives and policies that reward local service and provide financial support for in-service education and training.

4. Expanding Biosecurity and Bioeconomy Initiatives

African countries should develop robust bioeconomy policies and strategies to maximize emerging opportunities in bioeconomy and Biosecurity. This includes establishing bio-banks and genomic data independence to strengthen Africa's health sovereignty and advancing technological capabilities for waste



management and local production of infection prevention materials. Expanding the bioeconomy would foster job creation, reduce dependency on external resources, and support health resilience.

5. Engaging Youth in Biosecurity and Health Security Fields

Advocate for initiatives that make Biosecurity, bioeconomics, and biomedical research attractive to Africa's growing youth population. By investing in targeted education, scholarships, and early career development programs, Africa can harness the potential of its youth to drive innovation in health security. Promoting youth engagement in these fields will build a generation of leaders ready to address current and future health challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a follow-up to the Conference Declaration, the following recommendations are proposed.

1. Establish a Sustainable Health Financing Model that can address Africa's Needs

Develop a sustainable financing model for health infrastructure at all levels, reducing reliance on foreign donations and loans. This could include the creation of a pan-African health fund, taxation for health, and private-sector partnerships to ensure consistent and predictable funding for health security initiatives.

2. Establish a One Health Surveillance Network

Develop a collaborative health surveillance system that spans African nations and integrates human, animal, and environmental health data. This system should leverage AI and machine learning to enable rapid analysis and early detection of health threats. Indigenous knowledge of local disease patterns and environmental changes can enhance surveillance accuracy and improve early warning responses.



3. Foster African Biomedical Research and Innovation Hubs

Establish dedicated research hubs with state-of-the-art facilities focused on Africa-specific diseases and health challenges. These hubs would conduct critical research, from vaccine development to advanced diagnostics, and facilitate collaborations among African scientists, attracting regional and international research funding.

4. Develop a Resilient and Retentive Health Workforce Strategy

Implement a comprehensive strategy to retain healthcare workers by improving salaries, providing opportunities for career advancement, and offering competitive incentives. Establish exchange programs and training scholarships within Africa to encourage professional growth and specialization without the need to migrate out of the continent.

5. Promote Local Production of Essential Medical Supplies

Boost local manufacturing capacity for essential medical supplies, such as personal protective equipment (PPE), diagnostic kits, and vaccines. This would reduce reliance on imports during health crises, ensure a steady supply, and stimulate the local economy.

6. Create Cross-Border Health Emergency Response Teams

Develop cross-border health response teams that can be rapidly mobilized in case of outbreaks or health emergencies. These teams would be trained to respond to various disease outbreaks and equipped with standardized protocols to ensure rapid, coordinated responses across African countries.

7. Strengthen Biowaste Management Systems

Improve biomedical waste management through investment in sustainable disposal systems, stringent regulations, and training for healthcare facilities. This includes managing waste from hospitals, laboratories, and research facilities, reducing environmental impact, and preventing disease transmission.

8. Advance Data Management and Health Information Systems

Standardize health data collection and management across African countries to improve efficiency in healthcare delivery and epidemiological analysis. A centralized health information system should use secured, AI-enabled platforms to track patient information, manage disease trends, and optimize health resource allocation.

9. Encourage Youth Engagement in Biosecurity and Biomedical Research

Develop educational programs, internships, and scholarships to encourage youth participation in Biosecurity, bio-economics, and health research. This initiative should include outreach to schools and universities to raise awareness and interest in health security as a viable career path for the next generation of African leaders.

10. Invest in Bioeconomy Development and Innovation

Support Africa's bioeconomy by investing in biobanks, bioinformatics, and genomics research addressing health and environmental challenges. Encourage public-private partnerships to bring advanced technology, foster innovation, and reduce dependency on external resources for biosecurity needs. This strategy would provide both economic and health security benefits for the continent.

11. Support Indigenous Knowledge Systems in Health Research

Encourage the formal inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems in health research and biosecurity strategies. African traditional medicine and community health practices hold valuable insights that can be scientifically validated and used alongside conventional medicine to enhance disease prevention, treatment, and resilience.

12. Establish Centers of Excellence for Health Research and Training

Create regional Centers of Excellence dedicated to research and training healthcare professionals in infectious disease management, Biosecurity, and epidemic response. Centers should incorporate indigenous knowledge in training modules to help practitioners understand and engage with local communities more effectively.

13. Enhance Biosecurity Training and Capacity Building

Implement capacity-building programs focusing on Biosecurity for healthcare professionals, policymakers, and local communities. These programs should include indigenous practices related to hygiene, community-based disease management, and environmental stewardship, which are often overlooked but are integral to a holistic approach to health.

14. Build Community-Led Health Education and Communication Networks

Develop culturally relevant, community-led education programs to increase public awareness and cooperation in disease prevention. Indigenous leaders and healers can be crucial in promoting health practices and disseminating information, leveraging community trust to improve adherence to preventive health measures.

15. Foster Regional Partnerships for Data Sharing and Policy Development

Facilitate cross-border partnerships for real-time data sharing on health threats and coordinated policy development. This approach will help unify Africa's response to health threats, leveraging indigenous knowledge of disease transmission and modern technology to inform policy.