



African Union – InterAfrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR)

Press Release

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United Against Rabies Forum in the Fight against Rabies

Today is World Rabies Day. This day aims to raise awareness on the prevention of rabies and to highlight progress in eliminating this fatal disease.

The theme for this year's celebrations is **Rabies: Facts, Not Fear**, a theme bred by the misconceptions behind the disease that dates back to hundreds of years. Without facts, it is impossible to educate the masses about the disease and its elimination and people will continue to live in fear of having dogs vaccinated or sterilized against rabies due to the fake myths associated with the disease.

Millions of dogs are culled yearly for fear of spreading rabies and for the mistaken belief that a lower dog population may lead to reduced incidences of people being bitten by rabid dogs. Killing dogs to end rabies is misinformed and inhumane as methods that are used cause a lot of pain to the dogs. In addition, the livestock and wildlife sectors in Africa suffer from losses brought about by rabies transmission from dogs. This translates to losses in food security, household security and loss of biodiversity and foreign exchange from tourism. Rabies elimination can be made possible by the One Health approach that encourages all relevant agencies to work together locally, nationally and internationally to achieve the best possible health for people, animals and the environment.

The United Against Rabies Forum (UAR) whose goal is to end deaths in people from dog mediated rabies, particularly in Africa and Asia through their **Global Strategic Plan of 2030** sets out a clear framework to end deaths in people from dog-mediated rabies by 2030. Their goal is to increase understanding of the policy and research work needed to improve coordination, resource mobilization, and information sharing between partners towards the elimination of rabies as a disease, has brought together global organizations such as World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) to ensure rabies elimination by 2030. This is in partnership with partners such as the African Union– InterAfrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR)

Following its launch, the UAR created three strategic areas, each with a technical working group of the partners to operationalize the Zero by 30 goal. The technical groups are:

- a) Technical Working Group 1: Optimizing the effective use of vaccines, medicines, tools, and technologies.

- b) Technical Working Group 2: Identifying ways to generate, innovate and measure impact – *AU-IBAR is a member.*
- c) Technical Working Group 3: Generating sustained commitment and resources – *World Animal Protection is a member.* (WHO, 2020)

The UAR forum has engaged the AU-IBAR as part of the technical working group 2. This technical working group is tasked with; **Identifying ways to generate, innovate and measure impact.** The task within this group will be to:

- a. **Build One Health Approaches and Capacity** - Assist regions and their member states to design and implement One Health rabies elimination strategies, ensure regions and their member states strategies are endorsed by politicians and technocrats, enhance coordination of rabies strategies between regions and member states across human, animal, and environmental sectors, build capacity in critical areas, such as monitoring and surveillance, strategy implementation and public mobilization as well as support robust cross-border coordination and collaboration.
- b. **Move from fragmented siloed activities to integrated multisectoral country and regional ways of working** - Promote lesson learning and documentation of the experiences through case studies of significant progress made by countries in their rabies control programs and promote channels of communication across national and regional boundaries.

The AU-IBAR accepted the role as the point office for Africa in the drive to the Zero by 30 Global agenda and officially confirmed their commitment to lead the working the elimination of dog-mediated rabies in Africa by 2030. The AU-IBAR has therefore committed to develop an ‘African Rabies Elimination and Dog Population strategic Plan to strengthening and streamline collaboration and delivery of the global strategy amongst counties on the continent in Africa. This is in partnership with the One health tripartite (WHO, FAO and OIE), Africa CDC, World Animal Protection, Action for Protection of Animals Africa (APAA), the Global Alliance against Rabies Control (GARC) and other technical partners in this sector from across Africa.

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