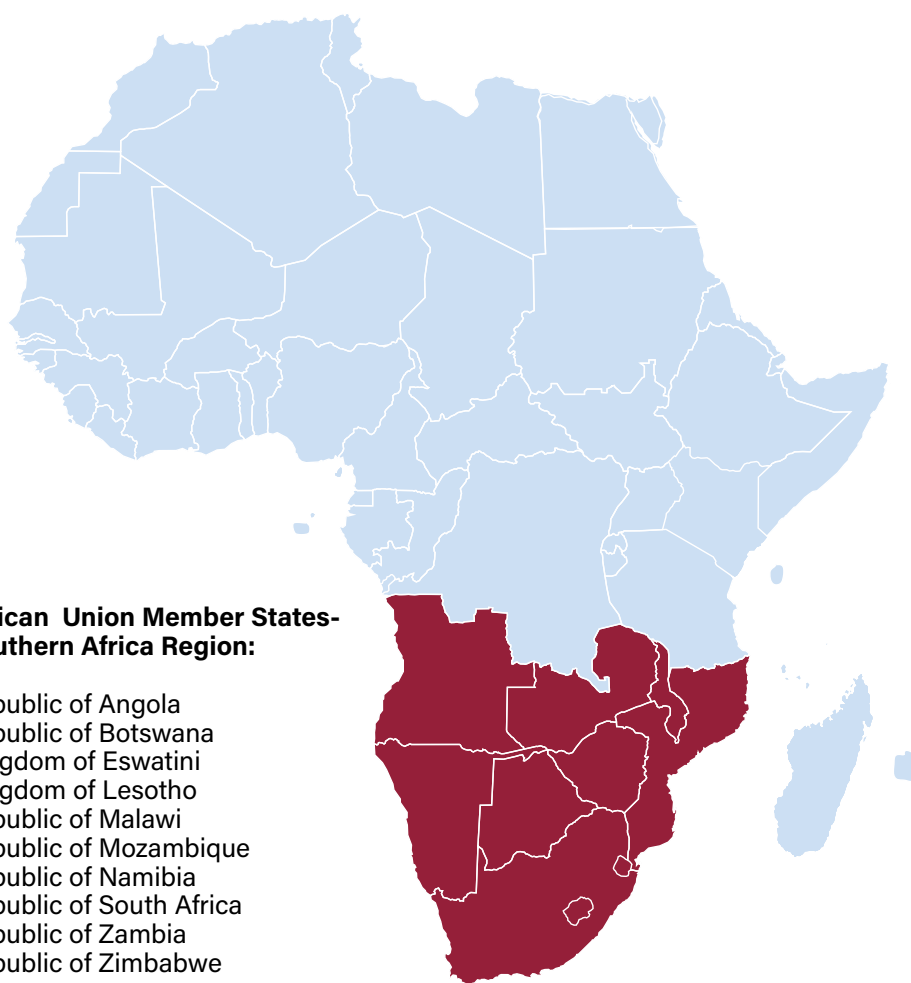


SUMMARY REPORT

THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE AFRICA CDC SOUTHERN AFRICA REGIONAL COLLABORATING CENTRE

31ST MARCH, 2021, MULUNGUSHI
CONFERENCE CENTRE, LUSAKA, ZAMBIA

Ensuring effective preparedness and response to the current
public health threats in the context of COVID-19 and beyond



**African Union Member States-
Southern Africa Region:**

- Republic of Angola
- Republic of Botswana
- Kingdom of Eswatini
- Kingdom of Lesotho
- Republic of Malawi
- Republic of Mozambique
- Republic of Namibia
- Republic of South Africa
- Republic of Zambia
- Republic of Zimbabwe



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1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I owe a special thanks and deep sense of gratitude to the people and Government of the Republic of Zambia for hosting the two African Union organs in Lusaka; the Southern Africa RCC and the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC). I would also like to point out that the launch of the Southern Africa RCC was made possible because of the dedication, commitment and support of the Government of the Republic of Zambia as stated by Her Excellency, the Vice President.

It was an honor to have Her Excellency, The Vice President of the Republic of Zambia, Mrs. Inonge Mutukwa Wina, Mp; His Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission; Mrs. Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, the Commissioner for Rural Economy & Agriculture, African Union; Honourable Minister of Health for Zambia and Host, Hon. Dr. Jonas Chanda, MP, and the Honourable Ministers of Health representing the Member States constituting the Southern Africa Regional Collaboration Centre namely: Republic of Angola, Republic of Botswana, Kingdom of Eswatini, Kingdom of Lesotho, Republic of Malawi, Republic of Mozambique, Republic of Namibia, Republic of South Africa, Republic of Zambia, and Republic of Zimbabwe in attendance.

Let me acknowledge with heartfelt appreciation the crucial role played by the Member States, especially, the regional Health Ministries, and the National public health institutions in making the event a success. We acknowledge their enormous and high-quality contributions that resulted in the adoption of nine key action points for implementation. In particular, my deepest sense of gratitude goes to Dr. Kennedy Malama, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Zambia, and Chair of the organizing committee; Prof. Victor Mukonka, Director General, Zambia National Public Health Institute (ZNPHI); Dr. Ilesh Jani, Director, National Public Health Institute (NPHI), Mozambique; Dr. Natalie Mayet, Deputy Director of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, South Africa; Dr. Mazyanga Liwewe, Head of Communication Information and Research, (ZNPHI); Dr. Abel Kabalo, Ministry of Health of Zambia; Mr. Henry Kansembe, Ministry of Health of Zambia; Mrs. Anne Mwiche, Ministry of Health of Zambia, and Mr. Davis Chutu, Ministry of Health of Zambia, for their significant leadership and facilitation role that have led to the positive outcome of the launch of the Southern Africa RCC, not forgetting SADC and COMESA.

My profound gratitude also goes to Dr. John Nkengasong, Director for Africa CDC; Dr. Ahmed E. Ogwell Ouma, Deputy Director of Africa CDC; Dr. Mohammed Abdulaziz, Head of Division for Disease Prevention and Control; Dr. Justin Maede, Principle RCC Coordinator; Mr. Saint Thomas Joly Ngbonga-Zindotealaand, Africa CDC Communication Fellow; Mr. G. Nekerwon Gweh, Africa CDC Communication Fellow, and the majority of the HQ colleagues who have provided effective leadership and technical support that have resulted in the success of the launch. I also appreciate the extraordinary technical support of Mr. William Carew, the Principal Coordinator of ECOSSOC Secretariat; Mrs. Myranda Lutempo, Policy Advisor, African Union Southern Africa Regional Office (AU-SARO), and Amb. Kipyego Cheluget, Assistance Secretary General for COMESA from the African Union Southern Africa Regional Office (AU-SARO) that has positively seen the event through.

I am indebted to all the international and UN partners who attended the launch and have been supporting the operationalization of the SA-RCC. A few to mention are: Dr. Pascale Ondo, Director of Science and New Initiatives, ASLM; Dr. Simon Agolory, US - CDC Country Director to Zambia; Dr. Nathan Bakayita, WHO Representative to Zambia; Mr. Edgar Lungu, on behalf of UNICEF country representative to Zambia; Mr. Joseph Pett, Senior Public Health Advisor, Public Health England, Zambia; Mr. Sahr Kpundeh, the World Bank Country Manager for Zambia; Viviane Sakanga, AMERAF Country Director, and Dr Notion Gombe Regional Technical Coordinator, AFENET.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the launch was successful, and a great milestone that has produced nine critical agreed upon action points that will effectively assist SA-RCC support Member States and attain its objectives in the Southern Region.

Dr. Lul P. Riek
Regional Coordinator
Southern Africa RCC (SA-RCC)

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) launched its Southern Africa Regional Collaborating Centre (SA-RCC) on 31st March 2021, from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm at Mulungushi Conference Centre in Lusaka, Zambia. The lunch was organised by the Southern Africa RCC in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH) of the Republic of Zambia under the auspices of Dr. Kennedy Malama, Permanent Secretary of the MOH of the Republic of Zambia, and Chair of the organizing committee.

The overall objective of the launch was to highlight the technical support and planned initiatives for the Southern Africa Region that include Health Security, information sharing, policy dialogue, regional collaboration and partnership, and challenges affecting the Member States, as well as coordination across borders in the context of COVID-19 and beyond.

The launch was well attended, and officially declared open by Her Excellency, Mrs. Inonge Mutukwa Wina, the Vice President of the Republic of Zambia, and supported by His Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, represented by Mrs. Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, the Commissioner for Rural Economy & Agriculture. Other participants in attendance include Hon. Dr. Jonas Chanda, MP, Minister of Health of the Republic of Zambia; Ministers from the Southern Africa Region; Her Excellency, Amira Elfadil Mohammed Elfadil, Acting Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development, - and over 6,000 persons who attended the launch, majority of them virtually via Africa CDC Twitter Handle and Facebook page. Also in attendance were representatives from WHO, UNICEF, US-CDC, AU-SARO, RECs and SADC, Public Health England, World Bank, COMESA, AMERA, and EFENET in Zambia (See ANNEX 3).

The meeting concluded by requesting the Southern Africa RCC to present the findings of the Role of Regional public health institutions in improving disease surveillance and response in the region; introduce the framework of the Regional Integrated Surveillance and Laboratory Networks (RISLNET); organize a high-level regional meeting to improve cross border surveillance in the context of health security; organize a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting, and encourage African Union Member States that don't have National Public Health Institute to establish one (See the table on agreed action points in No. 9 below)

3. ROLE OF THE SA-RCC

The meeting deliberated on the role of the Regional Collaboration Centre in the Southern Africa Region. The SA-RCC is hosted by Zambia, and serves the 10 African Union Member States as indicated above. The Regional Collaboration Centres play a very crucial role in the decentralized administration of Africa CDC. They form the link on public health issues between The African Union Commission/Africa CDC and the Member States in the Southern Africa region. Through the SA-RCCs, Member States in the region can network and share information more readily. They are also part of regional decision-making and actions taken by Africa CDC.

The Southern Africa-Regional Collaborating Centre is one of the first three out of five Africa CDC RCCs to be established. Since its establishment, the Southern Africa RCC has supported several activities in the Southern Africa region that include: the establishment of technical working groups and emergency operation centres, regional training activities, meetings, laboratory networking, partnerships, development and implementation of public health emergency preparedness and response plans by the Member States, cross-border surveillance, deployment of rapid responders and community health workers, and the Community Health Care Outcomes (ECHO) platform. All these supports have facilitated public health learning and knowledge exchange in the region.

4. GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

5.1 OVERALL GOAL

The overall goal of the meeting was to officially launch the Southern Africa Regional Collaborating Centre (SA-RCC), and highlight the technical support and regional planned initiatives for the Southern Africa Region.

5.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Engage Member States in policy dialogue, deliberate on critical health issues, and suggest ways to address challenges of Members States in the region.
- Discuss key issues that include the promotion of regional collaboration, partnerships, and coordination across borders in the context of COVID-19 and beyond.
- Brief participants on Africa CDC strategic vision including RCCs' framework for operation, RCC mandate, role and responsibilities of RCC, operationalization of the RCC governance, activation of the Regional Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), formation of a regional steering committee, and areas of collaboration and networking.

5. PARTICIPANTS

The meeting was attended by 225 participants on Zoom platform; 161 persons via Africa CDC Twitter handle @AfricaCDC; 5,986 persons via Africa CDC Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/africacdc>); 105 registered persons on the official attendance register from Fourteen (14) African countries, and thirty-five (35) participants in person (see Annex 3).

6. KEY SPEECHES

The launch ceremony was called to order by Dr. Kennedy Malama, The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Zambia, and the Chair of the organizing committee who presided over the meeting. He welcomed and introduced the participants expressing his gratitude for their attendance.

- In his opening remarks, the Southern Africa Regional Coordinator, Dr. Lul Riek, welcomed participants, introduced the goal and objectives of the launch, and conveyed his gratefulness for the official launch of the Southern Africa RCC.
- Her Excellency, Amira Elfadil Mohammed Elfadil, Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs, and Social Development, expressed her appreciation and honor to the Government and people of the Republic of Zambia for hosting the Southern Africa RCC that she signed on 8th February 2019, as well as to the Ministers and delegation from the Southern Africa Region, the organizers of the launch, and the partners present. The Commissioner underscored the importance of the RCC in tuning the African Union Commission vision into action, and taking services closer to the countries in the region.
- In his presentation, Dr. John Nkengasong, Director of Africa CDC, highlighted the history of the establishment of Africa CDC, including the mandate, and function of the RCCs. He informed the meeting about the vision of Africa CDC that is "A safer, healthier, integrated and prosperous Africa, in which the Member States can efficiently prevent disease transmission, implement surveillance and detection, and always be prepared to respond effectively to health threats and outbreaks". He emphasized the urgent need for the formation of a Regional

Steering Committee, and the operationalization of a Technical Advisory Committee. Before he concluded his presentation, Dr. Nkengasong drew attention to four priority areas to be implemented by the RCCs in the next four years namely: Harmonize surveillance and laboratory capacities through the Regional Integrated Surveillance and Laboratory Network (RISLNET); define coordination with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and other public health stakeholders; outbreak of public health event preparedness planning, and the African Volunteer Health Corps (AVoHC).

- Her Excellency Mrs. Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, the Commissioner for Rural Economy & Agriculture, on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission acknowledged and thanked Her Honour, the Vice President of the Republic of Zambia, and the people of Zambia for agreeing to host the launch and availing resources and support in ensuring the Southern Africa RCC is operational. He also appreciated the presence of the Ministers and delegation from the 10 African Union Member States in the Southern Africa region, and acknowledged SADC, COMESA, international partners, and other public health stakeholders present for their attendance and support to ensure SA- RCC is fully functional.

The Representative of the Chairperson of Africa Union reminded the audience on her commitment to implement the African Union Heads of State and Government (AU HoSG) Decision AU/Dec.554 (XXIV) adopted at the 24th Ordinary Session of the Assembly held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in January, 2015 establishing the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), and its Regional Collaboration Centres (RCC).

She highlighted the achievements of RCC in the Southern Africa region in their preparedness and response to health outbreaks including COVID-19. She said that “The Southern RCC Member States also continue to actively participate in several activities of the multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral Africa Task Force for Coronavirus Response (AFTCOR)”. She urged the Honourable Ministers to encourage their senior staff to regularly attend the AFTCOR meetings, every Tuesday afternoon.

She noted that despite the progress made, SA-RCC is facing challenges such as insufficient resources for the implementation of the health security agenda, and public health priorities within the region, lack of timely data and information from Member States to inform collective response efforts and regional strategies, and limited collaboration and coordination among different stakeholders within the region in utilizing available resources and efforts to attain maximum public health outcomes. He called upon all Member States and other stakeholders within the region to come together and collaborate to support the Southern African Region, Africa and the whole world, end COVID-19 pandemic, and public health priorities within the region.

She reminded the gathering that “health is both a security and an economic agenda. The continental, regional and national development agendas will only be realized if we create safer environments that allow economies and livelihoods to prevail without being hampered by public health events as have been demonstrated during this COVID-19 pandemic”.

She concluded by assuring the Member States that “the African Union Commission through the Africa CDC and its regional collaborating centres, will continue to support all the Member States of the African Union in ensuring that the continent is fully capacitated to prevent, protect against, and respond efficiently to any public health threat” (See Annex 5 for the speech).

- In her key note address, Her Honour, Mrs. Inonge Mutukwa Wina, MP. The Vice President of the Republic of Zambia, informed the meeting that the Government of the Republic of Zambia, under the leadership of His Excellency, the President, Dr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, remains committed to the implementation of the African Union Heads of State and Government decision. She pointed out that the African Union Member States in the region need to work as

one continent and one people with one goal in achieving an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena. She said Zambia was honoured to host two African union organs in Lusaka, namely, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), and the SA-RCC, which she is launching. She stated the support Zambia has provided to the RCC, which is office space, staff and other logistics, and said as a country, Zambia takes the honour with great respect and gratitude.

She acknowledged the negative impact of Covid-19 in Southern Africa and all over the world, and the need to collaborate to fight the pandemic, thus the need for the SA-RCC to coordinate the fight against public health diseases including COVID-19 in the region since some epidemics and pandemics know no boundaries. She further went on to say “the impact of Covid-19 also reminds us of the need to re-think the way we collaborate in order to address public health threats that have the potential to disrupt the socio-economic status of our people in the region”.

She concluded by saying “while significant progress has been made in the past three years, there is need for Member States to upscale and strengthen the SA-RCC by financing, equipping, and managing its programmes effectively in order to meet regional expectations in line with the decision of the African Union heads of states and government”. She ended by conveying her government’s gratitude to the African Union, and Africa CDC for providing support to Member States in the region, and Zambia in particular in coordinating epidemics and pandemics through the establishment of SA-RCC.

The Vice President made a request to the ministers of health in the region to place a premium on the operations of the RCC and its affiliate institutions in the member countries. She reiterated that the launch of the RCC demonstrates the willingness of the Member States to contribute the African Union goal of uniting Africa for peace and prosperity across the continent. She then declared the Southern Africa Regional Collaborating Centre officially launched in Zambia on the 31st of March, 2021 (See Annex 4 for the speech).

- In their deliberations, the Ministers of Health in the Southern Africa Region, experts from the National public health institutions, and the health partners took stock of the progress made, and the constraints encountered in the implementation of health security, and the regional integrated surveillance and laboratory network (RISLNET). They discussed the thematic areas on the meeting agenda, and charted a way forward on possible approaches and actions that will be implemented over the next four years. The table in No.9 summarises the agreed action points.
- In his closing remarks, Dr. Ahmed Ogwel Ouma, Deputy Director of Africa CDC, expressed his commitment to supporting the implementation of the agreed actions in the Southern Africa Region. He also expressed his sincere gratitude to the Government and people of the Republic of Zambia for hosting the Southern Africa RCC, and the excellent organization of the launch ceremony. He appreciated the participation of the Ministers and their delegation from the entire 10 Southern Africa Region at the launch. He also acknowledged the participation of all the partners in the region, and thanked the Ministry of Health and the SA-RCC for organising the well-attended and successful launch.

7. CLOSING

The launch was officially closed by the Honourable Minister of Health of the Republic of Zambia, Dr. Jonas Chanda.

8. AGREED ACTION POINTS

Thematic Area	Proposed Actions	Responsible Institution	Timeline
Health Security and Information Sharing among Member States in the region.	Southern Africa RCC to present the findings of the Role of Regional public health institutions in improving disease surveillance and response in Southern Africa to Member States in the Southern Africa Region.	RCC.	April, 2021
	Southern Africa RCC to introduce the framework of the Regional Integrated Surveillance and Laboratory Networks (RISLNET) in the Region.	RCC.	May, 2021
	Southern Africa RCC to organize a high-level regional meeting on how to improve cross border surveillance in the context of health security.	RCC/Africa CDC HQs.	June, 2021
Partnership and collaboration within the Member States in the Region.	Member States to nominate substantive RCC focal point in order to improve the coordination between countries and the RCC.	Member States in the Region.	April, 2021
	Southern Africa RCC to organize a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting.	Chair of TAC (South Africa) in collaboration with RCC.	May, 2021
	Southern Africa RCC to establish the Regional Steering committee for the Ministers of Health and health partners in the Region.	RCC and Member States.	June, 2021
	Southern Africa RCC to organize a regional meeting for directors of NPHIs/ equivalent on how to improve cross border surveillance in the context of COVID-19 and beyond.	RCC and Member States.	July, 2021
	Africa CDC to encourage African Union Member States in the Region that don't have National Public Health Institute to establish one. Africa CDC to provide technical guidance.		

9. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: CONCEPT NOTE

1. BACKGROUND

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), as a specialized technical agency of the African Union, aims to support African Union Member states in their efforts to effectively respond to public health emergencies. This is through capacity building of public health professionals, and technical assistance to countries to address complex health challenges. To fulfill its mandate, Africa CDC has recognized a strong need for partnerships to timeously, effectively, and efficiently, deploy public health assets across Africa. Strengthened collaboration among Africa's laboratory systems is a prerequisite for building resilient continental health security architecture.

In this regard, five Regional Collaborating Centres (RCCs) were established as the support office for Africa CDC in regions namely Central Africa RCC based in Libreville, Gabon; Eastern Africa RCC based in Nairobi, Kenya; Northern Africa RCC based in Cairo, Egypt; Western Africa RCC based in Abuja, Nigeria, and Southern Africa region RCC based in Lusaka, Zambia. The following countries are part of the Southern Africa RCC: Republic of Angola; Republic of Botswana; Kingdom of Eswatini; Kingdom of Lesotho; Republic of Malawi; Republic of Mozambique; Republic of Namibia; Republic of South Africa; Republic of Zambia, and Republic of Zimbabwe.

RCC is mandated to support the execution of Africa CDC's strategic plan in the regions, and support Member States based on need. The RCCs are created to facilitate the capacity building of the regional Member States; collaborate on public health issues between African Union Member States in a given geographic region, and support regional engagement between the Member States on emergency preparedness and response, surveillance and laboratory integration, antimicrobial resistance, and other public health issues that are addressed more effectively through a coordinated strategy. Regional Collaborating Centers (RCCs) were created mainly to coordinate regional public health initiatives in Member States, in consultation with Africa CDC headquarters. Specifically:

- Technical support to Member States in implementing the strategic objectives of the five functional pillars of the Africa CDC, including cross cutting areas like public health workforce development, partnerships, innovation, finances, leadership and management.
- Strengthening of core capacities in Member States around surveillance, laboratory systems and networks, information systems, emergency preparedness and response, and public health research.
- Strengthening collaborations among Member States in emergencies, disease outbreaks, and in responding to epidemic and pandemic infectious diseases, and non-communicable diseases.
- Other functions include (a) training of public health personnel in Member States, (b) facilitation of communication among the Member States, RCCs and Africa CDC secretariat and (c) actively collaborating and liaising with the National Public Health Institutes or equivalent agencies to have updated information on the public health status of each Member State within their regions.

2. GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Goal

To officially launch the Southern Africa Regional Collaborating Centre (RCC), and reveal the technical support and regional planned initiatives.

2.2 Specific Objectives

- Operationalize Southern Africa RCC and its advisory structures including Regional Steering Committee (RSC) and Regional Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).
- Introduce and discuss the key priorities of the Southern Africa Regional Integrated Surveillance and Laboratory Networks' (RISLNET) key priorities.
- Generate regional opportunities for policy dialogue, and discuss and agree on critical public health issues in the region.
- Promote regional collaboration, partnerships, and coordination across borders in context of COVID 19, and beyond.

2.3 Expected Outputs

- Southern Africa RCC launched and operationalized including its Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), as well as, the Regional Steering Committee (RSC).
- Southern Africa RCC mandate and structures including roles and responsibilities reviewed and endorsed.
- Southern Africa RISLNET framework introduced, discussed, and way forward agreed on for its implementation.
- Coordination across regional borders promoted and strengthened for timely information sharing, and emergency preparedness and response in the context of COVID-19 and beyond.

3. ORGANISATION OF MEETING

The one-day meeting will be held in Lusaka, Zambia on Wednesday 31st March, 2021 from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm Lusaka time with selected fifteen (15) participants meeting physically, and the rest joining virtually. The proposed list of the participants who will attend the RCC launch physically include the following:

- Two participants from the Africa CDC HQs/African Union including advance team.
- Six participants from the Government of the Republic of Zambia (MoH/ZNPHI).
- One participant from ECOSOCC Secretariat.
- Six participants from the Southern Africa RCC.
- Invited press/media.

4. INVITATION

Invitation also will be extended to the following Member States to participate virtually:

- Ministers of Health, Directors of the National Public Health Institutes (NPHIs)/Director of Public Health, and Head of Surveillance/ Disease Control.
- The Member States include: Republic of Angola, Republic of Botswana, Kingdom of Eswatini, Kingdom of Lesotho, Republic of Malawi, Republic of Mozambique, Republic of Namibia, Republic of South Africa, Republic of Zambia, and Republic of Zimbabwe.
- Representatives of academic institutions (one from each of the ten regional Member States).
- Representatives of veterinary networks (one from each of the ten regional Member States).
- Representatives of Environmental health (one from each of the ten regional Member States).
- Representatives of Centers of Excellence in Southern Africa Region.

- Members of the Southern Africa Biosafety and Biosecurity technical working group (BB-TWG).
- Twenty-four Members of the provisional technical Advisory committee (TAC) for Southern Africa RCC.
- Africa CDC rapid responders in Zambia (10), Malawi (10), Zimbabwe (17), Namibia (5).
- One participant from the Regional Economic Communities (SADC and COMESA).
- Five health partners in Zambia (WHO Representative, US CDC, World Bank, Public Health England, and UNICEF).
- Representative of African Society for Laboratory Medicine (ASLM).
- Representative of Africa Field Epidemiology Network (AFENET).
- Representative of Southern Africa Development Community (SADC).
- Representative of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).
- Representative of African Union Commission for Southern Africa Region (AU-SARO).
- Representative of Global Fund in the Southern Africa Region (Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe).
- Representatives from the Eastern Africa RCC.
- Representatives from the Central Africa RCC.
- Representatives from the Western Africa RCC.

ANNEX 2: AGENDA

Time	Event description	Responsible Person	Chair of Session
Opening Session			
	National Anthem: Zambia/AU	All	
9:00 – 09:05 am	Introduction	All	Dr. Kennedy Malama, PS Ministry of Health of the Republic of Zambia and Chair of the Organizing Committee.
09:05 - 09:10 am	Welcoming remarks and Objective of the launch.	Dr. Lul Riek, Regional Coordinator, Southern Africa RCC.	
09:10– 09:30 am	Opening remarks and presentation on Africa CDC strategic vision including RCCs' Framework for operation (RCC mandate, role and responsibilities).	Dr. John Nkengasong, Director of Africa CDC.	
09:30 – 09:40 am	Opening remarks	Mrs. Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, the Commissioner for Rural Economy & Agriculture on behalf of His Excellency, Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission.	
10:00 – 10:05 am	Opening Remarks	Hon. Dr. Jonas Chanda, Minister of Health of the Republic of Zambia.	
10:05 -10:25 am	Keynote address and official launch	Her Excellency, Mrs. Inonge Mutukwa Wina, The Vice President of the Republic of Zambia.	
10:25– 10:20 am	Group picture	All participants	
STRATEGIC SESSION			
10:20 – 11: 00 am	Discussion on Africa CDC strategic vision including RCCs' Framework for operation (RCC mandate, roles responsibilities). Way forward in context of Southern Africa RCC.	Ilesh Jani, Director, National Institute of Public Health- Mozambique	
11:00 -11:15 am	Tea Break		
11:15 am-12:15 pm	Discussion on strengthening cooperation and partnerships among the Southern Africa Member States and Health Partners.		Prof. Victor Mukonka, Director General Zambia National Public Health Institute (ZNPHI)

Time	Event description	Responsible Person	Chair of Session
	<p>Partner's & RECs Perspectives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr Pascale Ondo, Director of Science and New Initiatives, ASLM. 2. Dr. Simon Agolory, US - CDC Country Directo, Zambia. 3. Dr. Nathan Bakyaite, WHO Representative, Zambia. 4. Mr. Edgar Lungu, UNICEF, Zambia. 5. Mr. Joseph Pett, Senior Public Health Advisor. Public Health England, Zambia. 6. Mr. Sahr Kpundeh, World Bank Country Manager,Zambia. 7. Southern African Development Community (SADC), Dr. Lamboly G N. Kumboneki. 8. Ambassador Dr. Kipyego Cheluget, COMESA Secretariat. 9. Dr. Nathan Bakyaite to Zamb 	<p>Partnership Discussion:</p> <p>SA-RCC.</p> <p>Dr. Lul Riek, Regional Coordinator for Southern Africa RCC.</p> <p>Dr. Justin Maede, Principal, RCC Coordinator, Africa CDC HQs.</p> <p>Dr. Mohammed Abdulaziz, Head of Division of Disease Prevention and Control HQs.</p> <p>(3 minutes per speaker)</p>	
	<p>B. Member States discussion and feedback</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Republic of Angola 2. Republic of Botswana 3. Kingdom of eSwatini 4. Kingdom of Lesotho 5. Republic of Malawi 6. Republic of Mozambique 7. Republic of Namibia 8. Republic of South Africa 9. Republic of Zambia 10. Republic of Zimbabwe 	<p>Member States discussion to be moderated by</p> <p>Dr. Natalie Mayet, NICD, South Africa.</p> <p>Prof. Victor Mukonka, Zambia National Public Health Institute.</p> <p>(3 minutes per speaker)</p>	
12:15-12:45 pm.	Agreed action points and way forward.	Hon. Minister of Health of the Republic of Zimbabwe.	
12: 45-1:00 pm.	Vote of thanks.	Africa CDC HQs/African Union.	

ANNEX 3: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS WHO ATTENDED THE LAUNCH

The meeting was attended by 225 participants on Zoom platform; 161 persons via Africa CDC Twitter handle @AfricaCDC; 5,986 persons via Africa CDC Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/africacdc>); 105 registered persons on the official attendance register from Fourteen (14) African countries, and thirty five (35) participants in person.

1. The meeting was attended by the Government and people of the Republic of Zambia. They included Her Excellency, the Vice President of the Republic of Zambia, Mrs. Inonge Mutukwa Wina; Hon. Dr. Jonas Chanda, MP, Minister of Health of the Republic of Zambia; Dr. Kennedy Malama, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Zambia and Chair of the organizing committee; Prof. Vector Mukonka, Director General, Zambia National Public Health Institute (ZNPHI); Dr. Abel Kabalo, Ministry of Health of Zambia; Mr. Henry Kansembe, Ministry of Health of Zambia; Mrs. Anne Mwiche, Ministry of Health of Zambia and Mr. Davis Chutu, Ministry of Health of Zambia.
2. In attendance remotely were: The honourable Ministers of Health from the Southern Africa Region; Regional Directors of National Public Health institutes; Dr. Ilesh Jani, Director National Institute of Public Health-Mozambique; Dr. Natalie Mayet, NICD, South Africa; Regional technical working groups including Biosafety & Biosecurity; IPC; regional surveillance; emergency preparedness & response; Regional communication technical working group, and the regional technical advisory members.
3. The African Union team who participated in the meeting included His Excellency, Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, represented by Her Excellency, Mrs. Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, the Commissioner for Rural Economy & Agriculture on behalf; Her Excellency, Amira Elfadil Mohammed Elfadil, Acting Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development; Dr. John Nkengasong, Director of Africa CDC; Dr. Ahmed E. Ogwel Ouma, Deputy Director of Africa CDC; Dr. Mohammed Abdulaziz, Head of Division of Disease Prevention and Control; Dr. Justin Maeda, Principal RCC Coordinator, and majority of HQs colleagues who participated remotely.
4. The Africa CDC Southern Africa Regional Collaborating Centre and staff from other sectors was led by Dr. Lul P. Riek, Regional Coordinator; representatives of ECOSSOC Secretariat led by Mr. William Carew, Principal Coordinator; Mr. Kyertwie A. Osei, Head of Programmes; Mr. Kokou Seneame Djagadou, Program officer and Dr. Gowtam Raj Chintaram, Desk officer; Mrs. Myranda Lutempo, Policy Officer at Economic Affairs, African Union Southern Africa Regional Office (AU-SARO); Amb. Kipyego Cheluget, Assistant Secretary General, COMESA, African Union Southern Africa Regional Office (AU-SARO). The launch was also attended by the representatives of the African Union Regional Economic Communities (RECs); Dr. Lamboly G N. Kumboneki, SADC.
5. In attendance were also key health partners such as: Dr. Pascale Ondo, Director of Science and New Initiatives, ASLM; Dr. Simon Agolory, US - CDC Country Director to Zambia; Dr. Nathan Bakyaite, WHO Representative to Zambia; Mr. Edgar Lungu, on behalf of UNICEF country representative to Zambia; Mr. Joseph Pett, Senior Public Health Advisor, Public Health England, Zambia; Mr. Sahr Kpundeh, the World Bank Country Manager for Zambia, and AMERAF and EFENET representatives.
6. A good number of attendees participated remotely, via Twitter handle and Facebook page.

ANNEX 4: SPEECH OF THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

Speech of Her Honour the Vice President of The Republic of Zambia, Mrs. Inonge Mutukwa Wina, Mp. at the official launch of the Southern Africa Regional Collaborating Centre (RCC) held virtually on 31st March, 2021.

- Your Excellency, Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission;
- Your Excellency, Amira El Fadil, Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs, and Social Development, African Union Commission;
- The Honourable Minister of Health for Zambia and Host, Hon. Dr. Jonas Chanda, Mp;
- The Honourable Ministers of Health, Representing the Member States Constituting the Southern Africa Regional Collaboration Centre (RCC);
- Permanent Secretaries and Other Senior Government Officials in Attendance;
- The Director, Africa Centre for Disease Control;
- The Director and Representatives of the Southern Africa Regional Collaborating Centres (RCCs);
- Directors of National Public Health Institutes or Equivalent;
- Heads of Surveillance or Disease Control Units;
- Representatives of Regional Economic Communities in SADC and COMESA;
- Distinguished Experts and Invited Guests;
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me start by welcoming you all and state that on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia and indeed on my own behalf, I am honoured to address this important gathering on the occasion of the launch of the Africa CDC-Southern Africa Regional Collaborating Centre (RCC).

Allow me to also congratulate His Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat for his re-election as the Chairperson of the African Union. Further, let me extend congratulations to all the re-elected and newly appointed Members of the African Union Commission. This is a mark of confidence of your hard work and that the results are well appreciated by the people of Africa – congratulations once more.

DISTINGUISHED INVITED GUESTS,

I wish to remind this gathering that we meet today as one continent, one people, with one goal of achieving an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena. It is clear from this statement that as countries, regions and the continent, we need to work together as Member States and partners in development on the continent and the world at large. In this regard, Zambia is honoured to host two African Union organs in Lusaka, namely, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) which has been in Zambia since 2019. In addition, we are privileged to host the Southern Africa Regional Collaborating Centre, which we are launching today. As a country, we take this honour with great respect and gratitude.

YOUR EXCELLENCES, HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

Let me report that since the signing of the host agreement on 8th February 2019, Zambia has provided office space, staff and other logistics thereby operationalizing the Regional Centre. I thank the honourable Minister of Health in Zambia, Dr. Jonas Chanda and his team for securing office space and the necessary logistics as part of fulfilling the provisions of the host agreement between the African Union and the Zambian government. As we mark this important milestone, we are all aware that the negative impact of Covid-19 is written in bold all over the world. No one country or economy has been spared, and it is a clear reminder that unless we collaborate to fight the pandemic, every country on its own will not win the war. Therefore, it is within such context that the Regional Collaborating Centre will play its role of coordinating the region in terms of human resource, equipment and necessities to

support the Regional Centre to effectively execute its mandate with guidance from the Africa Centre for Disease Control.

We should, therefore, all gather courage not to further postpone collaboration and implementation of what was planned because the covid-19 story is teaching us to do one thing – collaborate or else remain alone as countries and yet face the consequences of isolation. With respect to isolation, the law of the jungle teaches us that any animal that isolates itself from the pack is likely to face the predators alone. This, we want to avoid at all costs.

Therefore, our coming together in this manner is clear recognition of the desire to move forward as one group, because some epidemics and pandemics know no boundaries. It is, therefore, in the interest of all countries in Africa and across the globe to collaborate and make concerted efforts to control the spread of covid-19 while supporting each other to the best of our abilities. This call also goes beyond covid-19 because the world is yet to experience more epidemics and pandemics in the future.

YOUR EXCELLENCIES, HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

The impact of Covid-19 also reminds us of the need to re-think the way we collaborate in order to address public health threats that have the potential to disrupt the socio-economic status of our people in the region. While Covid-19 has ravaged the whole world and brought life to a near stand-still, it has also exposed the brighter side of life in that, when nations work together, a lot more can be achieved for the benefit of everyone in the world. The gap and the manner in which the supply of Covid-19 vaccines is being administered globally is a classic example of international threats when countries work in isolation. Therefore, the launch of the Regional Collaborating Centre on public health demonstrates our willingness to contribute the African Union goal of uniting Africa for peace and prosperity across the continent.

YOUR EXCELLENCES, HONOURABLE MINISTERS AND DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

As I conclude, let me state that while significant progress has been made in the past three years, there is need for Member States to upscale and strengthen the Regional Collaboration Centre by financing, equipping and managing its programmes well in order to meet regional expectations in line with the decision of the African Union Heads of States and Government (AU HOSG). I, therefore, call upon all Member States to actively participate in the discussions to set the regional targets and priorities in the context of Covid-19 and other health issues in the region using established platforms.

Finally, let me reiterate that Zambia remains grateful to the African Union, the Southern Africa Member States and cooperating partners for the tireless efforts of establishing the Regional Collaborating Centre. This could not have come about without the support of the Africa Centre for Disease Control (Africa CDC). Therefore, profound gratitude also goes to Dr. John Nkengasong, Director of Africa Centre for Disease Control for providing effective leadership along the way.

I wish to convey my government's gratitude to the African Union Commission for providing support to Member States in the region and Zambia in particular. I, therefore, request the ministers of health in the region to place a premium on the operations of the Regional Collaborating Centre and its affiliate institutions in the respective member countries. "With your full support, the region looks forward to the full operationalization of the Regional Centre. On this note, it is now my singular honour and privilege to declare the Southern Africa Regional Collaborating Centre officially launched in Zambia on this day the 31st of March, 2021.

MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL,

I THANK YOU

ANNEX 5: SPEECH OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

SPEECH OF H.E MOUSSA FAKI MAHAMAT, CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

- Her Honour. Mrs. Inonge Mutukwa Wina, MP. The Vice President of the Republic of Zambia;
- Your Excellency, Amira El Fadil, Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs, and Social Development, African Union Commission;
- Hon. Dr. Jonas Chanda, MP. Minister of Health of the Republic of Zambia and Host;
- The Honorable Ministers of Health within the Southern African Region Present;
- Dr John Nkengasong, Director of Africa CDC;
- Senior Government Officials Present;
- Representatives of the Member States Present;
- Distinguished invited Guests;
- Ladies and Gentlemen;

The African Union Heads of States and Government, taking into account the health challenges prevailing on the African continent, and the need for an accountable health security framework, approved the establishment of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) at the AU Summit in January, 2015 at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia as a specialized technical agency of the Union responsible for safeguarding the health security of the continent. The African Union Commission in collaboration with other partners worked tirelessly to ensure the vision of our Heads of State and Government becomes a reality by establishing the Africa CDC and its Regional Collaborating Centres (RCC), and by January 2017, Africa CDC was officially launched in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

It is with great honor that today we are witnessing the launch of the Africa CDC Southern RCC, four years following the official launch of the Africa CDC. The official launch of Africa CDC happened at the beginning of my first term as the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. I am privileged and honored to be part of its growth and observe the tremendous progress made on its establishment and operationalization from its headquarters in Addis Ababa to its regional collaboration centres, including the one that we will be launching today.

The African Union Commission would like to take this opportunity to extend its gratitude to you Hon. Vice President of the Government of the Republic of Zambia for agreeing to host and avail resources and efforts in ensuring the Southern Africa RCC is operational. I would also want to extend my sincere appreciation to the African Union Member States in the Southern African Region, the Regional Economic Communities within the region led by SADC, international partners, COMESA and other public health stakeholders within the region for the support you have continuously granted the African Union and Africa CDC in ensuring the RCC becomes fully functional.

Honorable Vice President, excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen

Since its establishment, the RCC has supported several activities in the Southern Africa region. Many of these achievements have already been reported. They include the establishment of a functional office in Lusaka, hosted by the Government of Zambia, and the support being provided to Member States in their preparedness and response to health outbreaks including COVID-19. This support includes the implementation of the Africa Joint Continental Strategy for Coronavirus Outbreak, which was launched during the African Union Emergency Ministerial Meeting of the Ministers of Health that I convened in February, 2020 at the beginning of the pandemic. The Southern RCC Member States also continue to actively participate in several activities of the multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral Africa Task Force for Coronavirus Response (AFTCOR). I urge all of you, Honourable Ministers, to encourage your senior staff to regularly attend these very important AFTCOR meetings, every Tuesday afternoon.

In this regard, the Africa CDC Southern RCC has supported the deployment of over 5,000 community healthcare workers, and 42 rapid responders. They have also continued to support surveillance, contact tracing, clinical case management, expansion of the COVID-19 testing capacity through laboratory supplies, and training of laboratory experts. They have further introduced and coordinated the ECHO platform where important health information is shared across the region. The RCC has also supported epidemiologic modeling of the COVID-19 pandemic to guide interventions as well as infection prevention and control through training of healthcare workers and strengthening Biosafety and Biosecurity capacity in the region.

We are proud of the tremendous progress made by Africa CDC in supporting the region and the whole continent but we still face several challenges that I would like to highlight here so that we can collectively address them to ensure that this Southern RCC is fully functional and deliver on its mandate. These include: 1) Insufficient resources for the implementation of the health security agenda and public health priorities within the region; 2) Lack of timely data and information from Member States to inform collective response efforts and regional strategies, and 3) Limited collaboration and coordination among different stakeholders within the region in utilizing available resources and efforts to attain maximum public health outcomes. I, hereby, call upon all Member States and other stakeholders within the region during this historical moment, to come together and collaborate to make the Southern African Region, Africa and the whole world, end this COVID-19 pandemic.

Hon, Vice President, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to conclude by reminding all of us that health is both a security and an economic agenda. The continental, regional and national development agendas will only be realized if we create safer environments that allow economies and livelihoods to prevail without being hampered by public health events as has been demonstrated during this COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, let me express my sincere appreciation to you Hon. Vice president; to H.E. Amira El Fadil, the Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs, and Social Development in the African Union Commission; Honorable Ministers of Health present here; our collaborating partners; Members of the Press, and all participants for making your time to participate in this historical occasion. I would like to assure you that the African Union Commission through the Africa CDC and its regional collaborating centres, will continue to support all the Member States of the African Union in ensuring that the continent is fully capacitated to prevent, protect against, and respond efficiently to any public health threat.

Thank you for your attention.



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