

Bamako Declaration

At the International Conference on Avian and Human Pandemic Influenza, (Ministerial Meeting and Pledging Conference) 6-8 December 2006, Bamako

The International Conference on Avian and Human Pandemic Influenza, featuring a Ministerial Meeting and Pledging Conference, was convened in Bamako, Mali 6-8 December, 2006. The Conference was co-organized by the Government of the Republic of Mali, the African Union and the European Commission in close coordination with the United Nations System Influenza Coordination, the UN specialized agencies, the World Bank, the OIE and other major partners. The conference was attended by delegates from more than 72 countries around the world and representatives of international technical and financing agencies, organizations, the private sector and civil society.

The Bamako Conference was organized to take stock of the evolution of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) and of the status of the international response to the crisis one year after Beijing, with special focus on Africa. This includes an assessment of the mobilization and coordination of financial support from the donor community for the national, regional and global response to the AI epidemic and for the preparation for a possible human influenza pandemic. The Bamako conference placed special emphasis on international cooperation to help build preparedness and response capacity in Africa, strengthen animal and human health systems, and halt the spread of the disease across the continent, mindful that East and South-East Asia continues to show the most prevalent avian influenza infection in animals and in humans. In addition, a pledging session helped address the financial gaps to meet the costs of combating avian flu and a potential human influenza pandemic.

The Bamako conference builds on the recommendations made during the previous international conferences on HPAI: the meeting of the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza in Washington (October 2005); The International Meeting of Health Ministers on Global Pandemic Readiness in Ottawa (October 2005); the meeting on Avian Influenza and Human Pandemic Influenza in Geneva (November 2005); the International Meeting on Early Response to Potential Influenza Pandemic in Tokyo (January 2006); the International Pledging Conference on Avian and Human Pandemic Influenza in Beijing (January 2006); and the Vienna Senior Officials Meeting on Avian and Human Pandemic Influenza (June 2006).

On a global scale, the world is faced with a re-emerging disease, HPAI, which like other communicable diseases, respects no national boundaries. The fight against HPAI should be used to strengthen the struggle against other emerging diseases. The disease has now spread from Asia to the Middle East, Europe and since February 2006, to different parts of Africa, with a high potential of spreading elsewhere. At the time of the Bamako Conference, more than 250 human cases have already been confirmed with over 150 deaths. There is a real possibility that further genetic changes in the virus strain might result in sustained human-to-human transmission and a human influenza pandemic. If not

detected, reported promptly and contained effectively, a pandemic could potentially kill millions and cause catastrophic consequences.

In Africa, the HPAI situation is also alarming and a great cause for concern not just for the affected and vulnerable regions but also for the international community at large. In the course of the year 2006, at least eight countries have reported outbreaks. Sixteen human cases with seven fatalities were reported in Africa. There is the possibility of avian influenza becoming firmly rooted in poultry in some regions, which increases the risk of the virus spreading across the continent. The movements of animal and human populations, and legal as well as illegal trade in infected animals and products, are considered the main sources for virus propagation in addition to the key role played by migratory birds. The incidence of avian influenza in Africa highlights the need to strengthen human and animal health systems across the continent to help build capacity to prevent the spread of the disease and cope with potential outbreaks.

There is an urgent need therefore, worldwide and in particular in Africa, to keep strengthening the capacity for (1) the animal and human influenza surveillance, (2) early warning systems, (3) diagnostic screening, (4) reporting systems and (5) applied research through appropriate north-south and south-south networks at our disposal. In addition, emphasis should be placed on complementary efforts of strengthening HPAI control programs, using classical sanitary and public health measures and improving bio-security in poultry production through stakeholder awareness and training.. There is also a great need for the implementation of internationally recognized guidelines on animal vaccination, relevant compensation schemes in relation to sanitary measures and operational communication and health education strategies.

Despite all efforts already in place, the H5N1 virus continues to spread. Stopping it will require comprehensive and sustained efforts from national governments as well as the international community.

We, the participants in the Conference,

1. Thank the Government of Mali, the African Union, the European Commission and the European Union and the other supporters of the conference for making the Bamako conference a success;
2. Applaud the efforts and the results of the past year, acknowledge the vigilance of the global response to the crisis and take note of the commitments and disbursements since the last pledging conference in Beijing 2006. In particular, support from international and regional initiatives, as well as most recently the synergistic efforts achieved for Africa through the ALIVE consultative platform, are duly acknowledged and applauded;
3. Recognize that, while our ability to define and respond to the socio-economic consequences of avian influenza and to the threat of a human influenza pandemic has improved significantly, the threat is still with us and that there should be

sustained and strengthened momentum in the fight against AHI. In particular, ongoing commitment to action by political leadership at the highest levels remains essential to prevent the regional and global spread of avian influenza with its impact on livelihoods and the potential for a human pandemic with catastrophic consequences. International mobilization to assist all affected and at-risk countries and to contribute to the promotion of food security by minimizing the impact of HPAI on the poultry production and on the management systems, especially where small-scale farmers are concerned, remains equally essential.

4. Reiterate our deep commitment to the outcomes of the Washington, Ottawa, Geneva, Tokyo, Beijing and Vienna conferences, which remain fully relevant (since avian influenza still remains an animal disease and the threat of the human pandemic continues), notably in (i) addressing disease outbreaks through concerted, internationally-supported rapid response, and in-country capacity building, (ii) ensuring effective development and implementation of the proposed integrated action plans at national levels within the framework of WHO/FAO/OIE global strategies, (iii) combining immediate with mid- and long-term actions, to address the complexity of the avian influenza crisis and the need to sustainably promote capacities of medical and veterinary services in compliance with international standards, (iv) preventing and controlling HPAI but also all other high impact communicable animal diseases as well as human health emerging diseases of pandemic emergencies, and (v) promoting enhanced communication and collaboration between animal and human health sectors, and (vi) ensuring coordination at all levels, notably at the global level through the United Nations System Influenza Coordination (UNSIC). Therefore we urge renewed efforts to strengthen the capacity of animal and human health services in compliance with the international standards and good governance principles of OIE and WHO, in particular through the early voluntary implementation of the International Health Regulations;
5. Commit ourselves to giving urgent attention to the threat of AHI in Africa, given its vulnerability and the already overwhelming impact of other epidemics like Malaria, HIV/AIDS and TB and economic and ecologic vulnerability to contain the continued spread of HPAI. The document prepared by the ALIVE Platform will be considered;
6. Commit to transparency in reporting of influenza cases in humans and in animals and to immediate sharing of epidemiological data and samples with the OIE/FAO, OFFLU network and WHO to detect and characterize the nature and evolution of any outbreaks as quickly as possible in order to achieve early containment;
7. Commit to increasing knowledge and awareness of the risks of avian and pandemic influenza and how people can best prepare and protect themselves. This includes timely, clear and transparent communication to our citizens of information regarding possible animal or human outbreaks;

8. Commit to share experiences broadly and keep evaluating the results and the impact of our national pandemic influenza preparedness and action plans periodically, reviewing and updating them as necessary and updating the global HPAI control strategy and human pandemic preparedness plans by taking advantage of the expertise and the existing technical networks established by UN, WHO, FAO, OIE and other relevant organizations and groups;
9. Welcome the general guidelines on compensation and the presentations during the Bamako conference on the progress made on animal vaccination and operational communication.
10. Acknowledge that the next International Conference on Avian and Pandemic Influenza is scheduled to take place in New Delhi, India in 2007.