

**Ministerial Roundtable on Accelerating Lassa Fever Vaccine Readiness –
A Strategic Moment for Regional Leadership**

Lassa Fever International Conference, Abidjan

September 8th, 2025



FINAL COMMUNIQUÉ

This communiqué is issued as part of the proceedings of Ministerial Roundtable on accelerating vaccine readiness during the ECOWAS Lassa Fever International Conference, held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 8-11 September 2025.

Chairs' Summary

The Ministerial Roundtable on Accelerating Lassa Fever Vaccine Readiness was convened on 8 September 2025 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, under the umbrella of the Lassa Fever International Conference. At the initiative of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, the Government of Nigeria, and the West African Health Organisation (WAHO), with support from the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI), Ministers of Health from across West Africa came together to address one of the region's most pressing health security challenges. Lassa fever causes an estimated 4,000 deaths each year, costs over USD160 million annually in lost productivity and treatment, and is projected to expand in risk as a result of climate change, potentially threatening up to 700 million people.

The Roundtable gave Ministers a platform to reaffirm political leadership, agree on joint priorities, and set the course for late-stage vaccine development. They committed to mobilising and securing national, regional and global resources through a collaborative co-funding approach. ECOWAS Health Ministers also pledged to strengthen national and regional platforms for trials, laboratories, and regulatory readiness. Finally, they agreed that investments in Lassa vaccine readiness must contribute to broader epidemic and pandemic preparedness, including the 100 Days Mission. These commitments are reflected in the communiqué of the International Conference, underscoring West Africa's collective resolve to deliver a Lassa fever vaccine and to build long-term health security for the region.

Communiqué

Convening and Participation

1. At the initiative of the Minister of Health, Public Hygiene and Universal Health Coverage of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, the Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and the West African Health Organisation (WAHO), with support from the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI), a closed-door Ministerial Roundtable on accelerating the development of the IAVI Lassa fever vaccine was held on 8 September 2025 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, as a prelude to the Lassa Fever International Conference organized by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS),

2. The following West African Health Ministers or their representatives attended the meeting:

Republic of Benin:	Prof Benjamin Hounkpatin , Minister of Health
Republic of Cabo Verde:	Dr. Jorge Figueiredo , Minister of Health
Republique of Cote d'Ivoire:	Pierre N'gou Dimba , Minister of Health, Public Hygiene, and Universal Health Coverage
Republic of Ghana:	Mr. Kwabena Mintah Akandoh , Minister of Health
Republic of Guinée -Bissau:	Mr. Augusto Gomes , Minister of Public Health
Republic of the Gambia:	Dr Ahmadou Lamin Samateh , Minister of Health and Social Welfare
Republic of Liberia:	Dr. Louise Kpoto , Minister of Health
Federal Republic of Nigeria:	Dr. Muhammad Ali Pate , Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
Republic of Senegal:	Dr Ibrahima Sy , Minister of Health and Social Action
Republic of Sierra Leone:	Dr Austin Demby , Minister of Health
Togolese Republic:	Prof. Tchin Darré , Minister of Health and Public Hygiene

3. Additionally, partners attended the meeting as observers:

World Health Organisation:	Dr. Chikwe Ihekweazu , Executive Director, WHO Health Emergencies Dr Abdourahmane Diallo , Director of Programme Management, WHO AFRO
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Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove, Acting Director of WHO's
Department of Epidemic and Pandemic Threat
Management

World Bank:	Franck Berthe , Senior Specialist;
Institut Pasteur de Dakar:	Dr. Ibrahima Soce Fall , CEO
EDCTP:	Dr. Michael Makanga , Executive Director of Secretariat
UK MRC Unit The Gambia:	Dr. Ed Clarke , Director
Center for Vaccine Development:	Prof. Samba Sow , CEO
The AfroChampions Initiative:	Dr. Edem Adzogenu , CEO
National Vaccine Institute (Ghana):	Dr. Sodzi Sodzi-Tette , CEO
International Finance Corporation:	Josiane Kwenda , Country Manager
Nigeria Health Watch:	Vivianne Ihekweazu , MD

4. Also participating were representatives of the West African Health Organisation (WAHO), the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI), as well as technical partners and other country observers.
5. The remarks were presided over by the His Excellency Dr. Muhammad Ali Pate, Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It featured remarks delivered by the following dignitaries:
 - **H.E. Dr. Muhammad Ali Pate**, Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
 - **H.E. Pierre N'gou Dimba**, Minister of Health, Public Hygiene, and Universal Health Coverage, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire
 - **Dr. Melchior Athanase J.C. Aissi**, Director General of WAHO
 - **Dr. Richard Hatchett**, Chief Executive Officer of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI)
 - **Dr Mark Feinberg**, Chief Executive Officer and President of the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI)
 - **Dr. Chikwe Ihekweazu**, Executive Director for the WHO Health Emergencies Programme
 - **H.E Dr Jean Kaseya**, Director General of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention
 - **Dr Michael Makanga**, Executive Director of European and Developing Countries Clinical Trial Partnership (EDCTP)
6. In their remarks, the speakers recalled the objectives of the Roundtable, underscored the importance of regional solidarity, and emphasized that West Africa must seize this unique

opportunity to demonstrate leadership in health security.

Burden and Rationale

7. The speakers also:

- Highlighted the burden of Lassa fever on populations in the region, particularly in endemic areas: more than 4,000 deaths annually, approximately \$110 million in productivity losses, and more than \$50 million in treatment costs. They also noted that climate change could place up to 700 million people at risk in the future¹.
- Recalled the recommendations from the first International Conference on Lassa Fever convened by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control in Abuja in 2019, as well as the political support expressed by ECOWAS Health Ministers at the Twenty-Sixth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Health Ministers (AHM) of ECOWAS, held in Praia, Cabo Verde, on 9–10 May 2025, to accelerate Lassa fever vaccine development.

Deliberations

8. Furthermore, they:

- Stressed that the region now stands at a critical inflection point as it enters the advanced phase of Lassa fever vaccine development,
- Outlined the steps and the short-, medium- and long-term financial resources needed to build a complete vaccine research and development ecosystem covering the entire value chain in the region,
- Indicated the pathway toward licensure of the Lassa fever vaccine, highlighting the key scientific, regulatory, and manufacturing milestones to be achieved,
- Acknowledged and commended the essential role of the Lassa Fever Coalition in coordinating regional efforts toward vaccine development, as well as the recent progress made in early clinical trials and multinational studies, while noting that three other vaccines are currently in clinical development.

Political Endorsement and Commitments

9. In the context of vaccine readiness as a cornerstone of health security, the Roundtable recognized the crucial importance of financing, and therefore of mobilizing resources commensurate with the scale of the challenge
10. The Ministers expressed strong support for resource mobilization from domestic, regional and global sources to accelerate vaccine development, including through joint donor outreach and participation in regional fundraising coordination mechanisms. The Ministers agreed that domestic financing will serve as an important mechanism to be leveraged as part of the broader funding approach for vaccine readiness.

¹: [Health and economic impacts of Lassa vaccination campaigns in West Africa – 2024, Nature, Nature Communications](#)

11. In line with the commitments made by the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government at their 58th Ordinary Session – where Member States pledged substantial domestic investments to strengthen regional security and resilience – the Ministers reaffirmed that financing Lassa fever vaccine readiness is integral as a pathfinder for regional collective action and long-term health security.
12. Beyond financing, the Ministers also recognized that to achieve the 100 Days Mission, the Lassa Fever Coalition must focus on strengthening essential core capacities, including qualified personnel for trials and laboratories, upgrading clinical trial site and cold chain infrastructure, streamlining regulatory authorization processes, and expanding community engagement.
13. The Ministers emphasized the need for stronger primary health care systems to enable effective disease surveillance and ensure reliable vaccine delivery. They also highlighted the need for stronger integration of health interventions as a platform for pandemic preparedness
14. The Ministers assured the Director General of WAHO and the Coalition partners of their full commitment to supporting the acceleration of Lassa fever vaccine development as a strategic regional health priority and as a cornerstone of broader pandemic preparedness efforts.
15. The Ministers committed to adopting a collaborative co-financing approach, coordinated by the Coalition, and assured participants of their political support to sustain the momentum generated by the Conference and to elevate Lassa fever as a health priority in West Africa.
16. The Ministers affirmed that they would remain fully attentive to the recommendations emerging from the Conference, including those relating to the exploration of appropriate financing mechanisms, as well as those concerning coordination and the sharing of technical knowledge.

Integration with Broader Conference and Acknowledgements

17. The Ministers expressed their wish that this communiqué be included among the overall outcomes of the International Conference on Lassa Fever and be reflected in the final communiqué of the Conference to be published.
18. The Ministers expressed their deep gratitude to the Government of Côte d'Ivoire for hosting the Roundtable, and warmly congratulated and thanked CEPI, IAVI, and WAHO for their valuable support in its organization.

Closing

19. The Ministers reaffirmed that this communiqué reflects West Africa's collective resolve to accelerate Lassa fever vaccine readiness as part of strengthening regional and global health

security.

**Done in Abidjan, 8 September 2025
By the ECOWAS Ministers of Health**

**His Excellency Dr. Muhammad Ali Pate
Coordinating Minister of Health and Social
Welfare
Federal Republic of Nigeria
Co-Chair of the Ministerial Roundtable on
Lassa Fever Vaccine Readiness**

**His Excellency Pierre N'gou Dimba
Minister of Health, Public Hygiene, and
Universal Health Coverage
Republic of Côte d'Ivoire
Co-Chair of the Ministerial Roundtable on
Lassa Fever Vaccine Readiness**

**Dr. Melchior Athanase J.C. Aissi
Director General of WAHO**