



**Office of Vice President
Republic of Liberia
Capitol Building, Capitol Hill
Monrovia, Liberia**

SPECIAL STATEMENT

Delivered By

Honorable Chief Dr. Jewel Howard-Taylor

Vice President of the Republic of Liberia

Chairperson, One Health Steering Committee in Liberia

At the

Call to Action Antimicrobial Resistance Meeting

Accra - Ghana

November 19, 2018

***HIS EXCELLENCY, NANA ADDO DANQUAH AKUFO-ADDO,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA;***

***THE INTER AGENCY COORDINATION GROUP (IACG) ON ANTI-
MICROBIAL RESISTANCE (AMR);***

***CHAIRPERSON AND MEMBERS OF THE CONFERENCE ORGANIZING
COMMITTEE;***

REPRESENTATIVES FROM OTHER GOVERNMENTS;

REGIONAL HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS;

ACADEMIA;

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS;

PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS;

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

All Other Protocols Duly Observed!

It is indeed a privilege to have been invited and to be given the opportunity to make opening remarks at this prestigious international conference on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR).

Today's forum bring together all actors from both governments and Healthcare Sectors at all levels; and creates an environment which will allow us to take a critical look at facts, figures, evidence and options for effective interventions for tackling important public health problems; including one of the most significant threats to public health in our One World today - antimicrobial resistance .

It is therefore a timely gathering and topic for discussion; given that many across the World and in our region have the need for antibiotics to treat coughs, colds, malaria and other serious ailments. In addition is a lingering problem - the constant pressure on healthcare professionals to prescribe antibiotics; with an attending potential for the misuse of these critical drugs at every level. This situation is further compounded because antibiotics are unlike many other drugs used in medicine.

As the more we use them the less effective they become against their target organisms. With antibiotics, overuse or inappropriate use allows bacteria to develop resistance and loose its usage. Research shows that Penicillin was discovered in 1928 and resistance to the drug identified as early as 1940. There have been several important drugs developed since then with similar effects.

As we grapple with this threat, please note that the most modern antibiotic was developed over 30 years ago; all of which also now show signs of resistance. It is a clear and present danger, for without anti biotic drugs to treat most human ailments, a simple disease could wipe out nations.

Being cognizant of this threat, my nation, Liberia, has also joined the global One Health plan – an approach linking human, animal and environmental health sectors has proven to be one of the best models that strengthens cross-sectorial, national and inter-country capacity for integrated disease surveillance and response in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and our global village.

It may interest you to note that, Liberia in 2016 conducted the Joint External Evaluation (JEE) of the International Health Regulations 2005 (IHR2005), in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO). A key IHR JEE recommendation was for Liberia to develop a National Action Plan (NAP) on AMR based on the country's situational analysis, and the Global Action Plan on Anti Microbial Resistance.

This action was belated taken after we experienced the EBOLA Epidemic. Over the period, we have worked together to overcome the devastating effects of the Ebola virus disease outbreak through implementation of the above recommendations.

As we look at the gains made over the period; we admit that more needs to be done to strengthen our prevention, detection and response capacity to mitigate shocks to our health system. In an attempt to effectively deal with this issue, the Liberian National work-plan has put in place a robust plan, which include the One Health Steering Committee in order to strengthen and sustain a multi sectorial and disciplinary approach.

Given this reality, five Technical Working Groups (TWGs) have been established and are convening on a monthly basis, they are: Surveillance and Reporting; Laboratory System Strengthening; Emergency Preparedness and Response; Human Resource and Capacity Development and last but not the least, Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR).

In June of 2018, we validated and launched the National Action Plan on Prevention and Containment of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) in Liberia, for implementation over five years.

So today, we acknowledge the need for an urgent collective clarion call to act now to combat AMR; given that the current trend of the growing number of infections ; e.g. pneumonia, tuberculosis, gonorrhoea and salmonellosis; are becoming harder to treat as antibiotics recommended for treatment have become less effective.

To put this strongly, AMR is a threat to humanity, global health, food security, national development and increased mortality around the World, but especially here in our region of the World.

Thankfully, we know that some of the factors which are contributing to AMR include:

- (1) Limited awareness on AMR and its contributing factors by public and key stakeholders
- (2) Weak enforcement of legislations/policies on prudent use of antimicrobial medicines, including manufacture and circulation of counterfeit medicines (porous cross borders)
- (3) Limited AMR surveillance, hence misunderstanding of scale of problem and
- (4) Limited policies on antimicrobial medicines prescription resulting in misuse/overuse of antimicrobial agents in humans and animals.

If one looks closely at these factors, I hope you will all agree with me, that AMR is a global public health crisis in waiting; so we must do all we can to tackle this threat from a sides, political, scientific and social.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen;

If our goal for gathering at this forum is geared towards reversing the spread of AMR, it will require all hands on deck . Some options are creating awareness and education on antimicrobial medicines overuse and misuse; improving infection prevention and control, sanitation and hygiene; Strengthening surveillance for AMR; Strengthening and enforcing regulations on antimicrobial medicines and lastly but not the least, scaling up support for interventions on AMR across all sectors by using a workable approach under the one health system mechanism.

It is my ardent hope that during these next two days; our focus will not only set objectives which promote pioneering initiatives, create and sustain global and national actions, inform the processes and deliverables of the Interagency Coordination Group (IACG); but will also encourage all stakeholders, especially Governments, to provide the needed financial and technical support to combat AMR and engender innovation to create the next generation of antibiotics; which are already on demand across our one World.

It has been a rare privilege to add my voice to this critical debate and call for action. As I look forward to the results, which all Nations can implement; I wish you successful deliberations.

I THANK YOU!