



## PRESS RELEASE

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire – 12 September 2025

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### WEST AFRICA UNITE IN ABIDJAN TO FAST-TRACK LASSA FEVER VACCINE AND STRENGTHEN EPIDEMIC PREPAREDNESS

**The 2nd ECOWAS Lassa Fever International Conference (#ELFIC 2025) concluded this Thursday 11 September 2025 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, after four days of high-level discussions, knowledge sharing, and strategic commitments.**

The gathering brought together more than 800 policymakers, scientists, health professionals, and development partners from across West Africa and beyond to confront one of the region's most persistent epidemic threats. The conference focused on six thematic pillars: regional coordination, advancing medical countermeasures, surveillance and early detection, technological innovations, community engagement, and sustainable financing.

#### **Ministerial Roundtable: A Strategic Moment for Regional Leadership**

Ahead of the opening ceremony, Health Ministers from ECOWAS Member States convened in a high-level Ministerial Roundtable on Accelerating Lassa Fever Vaccine Readiness. In a historic joint communiqué, Ministers pledged their commitment to:

- Advance the development and equitable access to Lassa fever vaccines for populations at risk.
- Strengthen regional collaboration in surveillance, research, and outbreak response.
- Mobilise sustainable financing and political will to ensure long-term epidemic preparedness.

This declaration marked a significant milestone for regional solidarity and leadership, underscoring that no single country can address Lassa fever alone.

#### **Key Discussions and Outcomes**

Throughout the six thematic tracks, delegates explored practical solutions and innovative approaches:

- **Food Safety and Prevention:** Experts urged communities to adopt safe food storage practices to reduce exposure to rodents, a key vector for Lassa fever.
- **Trust in Health Innovations:** Sessions emphasized the critical role of media and civil society in bridging trust gaps and addressing vaccine hesitancy in the region.
- **Local Solutions for Local Challenges:** Nigeria's Minister of Health highlighted the need for African-led solutions to combat Lassa fever, stressing that research, vaccine development, and epidemic response must be rooted in the region's realities.
- **Cross-Border Preparedness:** Participants agreed on the importance of data sharing and joint outbreak investigations to stop the spread of diseases across porous borders.



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### Looking Ahead

The conference reaffirmed the urgency of tackling Lassa fever as a regional health security priority, positioning West Africa at the forefront of global epidemic preparedness. With the commitments made in Abidjan, ECOWAS Member States and partners aim to accelerate progress towards the rolling out of the Lassa Fever Control Agenda which includes the development and rolling out of a licensed Lassa fever vaccine, expand access to diagnostics and treatments, and strengthen community resilience against future outbreaks.

### Voices from the Conference:

- *“This conference has demonstrated the power of regional solidarity. Together, we are moving from discussion to action, building a united West Africa ready to confront Lassa fever and future epidemics,”* said Dr Melchior Athanase J. C. Aïssi, Director General of the West African Health Organisation (WAHO).
- *“Our collective commitment to advancing a Lassa fever preparedness, response and control agenda, including the development of vaccines and other medical countermeasures, marks a turning point in West Africa. It is a strategic moment for joint regional leadership for elevating the health of our populations,”* said Dr Abdourahmane Diallo, Director of Programme Management, WHO Regional Office for Africa.

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### About the Conference

The ECOWAS Lassa Fever International Conference is convened by the West African Health Organisation (WAHO) in partnership with the World Health Organization [African Region], Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), World Bank, African Development Bank (AfDB) and other regional stakeholders. The 2025 edition was hosted in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 8 - 11 September 2025.