

## UN's anti-malaria envoy confident of reaching protection milestone in Africa



A mother and her newborn child lay under a mosquito bed net. Most malaria-carrying mosquitoes bite at night

27 August 2009 – The official tasked with spearheading United Nations efforts to tackle malaria says he is confident that the world can achieve Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's goal of providing all sub-Saharan African countries where the disease is endemic with universal access to insecticide-treated bed nets, indoor spraying and treatment by the end of next year.

Ray Chambers, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Malaria, has briefed Mr. Ban on his recent high-level visit to Tanzania and Uganda, where he and UN World Health Organization (**WHO**) Director-General Margaret Chan reviewed the progress being made in those two countries against the disease.

Mr. Chambers reported that bed nets are now available to an estimated 52 per cent of the endemic population across sub-Saharan Africa, offering protection to about 360 million people. In the past year alone, some 65 million treated nets have been delivered to the region.

"With only 16 months remaining until [Mr. Ban's deadline of] 31 December 2010, we remain confident that universal coverage is within our grasp," Mr. Chambers said today, according to a press release issued by his office.

"While challenges remain to be overcome, the unprecedented assemblage of dedicated leadership, proven interventions, available resources, and collective will position us to achieve the ultimate goal of a world without malaria deaths."

While in Tanzania and Uganda, Mr. Chambers and Dr. Chan – who were accompanied by Tadataka Yamada, the President of the Global Health Programme at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation – met with senior Government figures in the two countries, as well as with local malaria experts.

The delegation also visited urban and rural health centres that are focused on fighting malaria, including centres that are conducting trials of new vaccines.

Next month the African Leaders Malaria Alliance (ALMA) will be launched in New York to try to strengthen malaria-control efforts across the continent and to engage the global community about the importance of fighting the disease.

Last September government, business and civil society leaders launched a global campaign to reduce malaria deaths to near zero by 2015, with an initial commitment of nearly \$3 billion.

The Global Malaria Action Plan aims to cut deaths and illness by 2010 to half their 2000 levels by scaling up access to bed nets, indoor spraying and treatment, and achieve the near-zero goal through sustained universal coverage. Ultimately it seeks to eradicate the disease completely with new tools and strategies.

Halting the incidence of malaria is one of the many health-related targets that make up the Millennium Development Goals (**MDGs**), the pledges world leaders made to try to slash poverty, hunger, preventable illness and a host of other socio-economic ills by 2015.

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