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**REPORT OF ROUND TABLE 1**

**Laboratory services in the provision of quality health care**

**INTRODUCTION**

1. The Round Table on “Laboratory Services in the Provision of Quality Health Care” was held on 4 September 2003 under the chairmanship of the Minister of Health of Côte d’Ivoire, Mr Albert Mabri.
2. The facilitator was Prof. Muyembe Tamfum, Director of INRB, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Dr Chatora, Director of Health Systems and Development Division, introduced the Chairman and facilitator.
3. The facilitator gave an overview of the situation of laboratories in countries of the Region, highlighting the major problems encountered and identifying various areas where solutions may be found in order to improve the performance of laboratory services.
4. The Chairman subsequently opened the floor for discussion.

**CONTRIBUTIONS**

5. Forty-eight country delegates took part in the Round Table. Fifteen contributions were made. In addition to acknowledging the primary role of laboratories in health care delivery, the contributors noted the disastrous situation in our Region before proposing the following solutions:
  - (a) Conduct a situation analysis of laboratories as a pre-requisite to any action aimed at improving the performance of laboratories;
  - (b) Formulate and implement an effective national laboratory policy with a full-fledged central directorate and a separate budget line.
  - (c) Put in place a national network of reference laboratories that would enable the supervision and coordination of activities.
  - (d) Standardize equipment, reagents and tests by level of the health pyramid.

- (e) Formulate norms and rules of technical procedures and promote a programme of quality assurance.
- (f) Encourage bulk purchases and the local production of what is considered to be basic reagents. Secure the loyalty of suppliers.
- (g) Organize the legislative framework and the management of the accreditation procedures.
- (h) Design investment plans in laboratory sector taking into account the maintenance and renewal of equipment.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

6. Following a general assessment of the solutions proposed, participants in the Round Table agreed that the main problem was the lack of an appropriate laboratory policy that would constitute the ideal framework for effective application of corrective interventions. Consequently, they recommended the following:

### **To countries:**

- (a) Conduct a situation analysis of their laboratory services.
- (b) Formulate an effective national laboratory policy, as an integral part of the national health policy, implemented through a central directorate and a national network of laboratories.
- (c) Formulate a regulatory and legislative framework to govern the operation of laboratories.
- (d) Allocate adequate resources for laboratory activities.

### **To WHO and other partners:**

- (a) Technical support should be provided for situation analysis, policy formulation and for definition of norms and rules of technical procedures;
- (b) Financial support should be provided to improve laboratory equipment at country level.