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Coordination, programme and other questions: tobacco or health

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The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

Malaria: a great concern in Africa

Malaria is caused by a parasite that is passed from one human to another by the bite of infected *Anopheles* mosquitoes. After infection, the parasites (called sporozoites) travel through the bloodstream to the liver, where they mature and release another form, the merozoites. The parasites enter the bloodstream and infect red blood cells. The parasites multiply inside the red blood cells, which then break open within 48 to 72 hours, infecting more red blood cells. The first symptoms usually occur 10 days to 4 weeks after infection, though they can appear as early as 8 days or as long as a year after infection. The symptoms occur in cycles of 48 to 72 hours. Most symptoms are caused by:

- The release of merozoites into the bloodstream
- Anaemia resulting from the destruction of the red blood cells
- Large amounts of free haemoglobin being released into circulation after red blood cells break open

Malaria can also be transmitted from a mother to her unborn baby (congenitally) and by blood transfusions. Malaria can be carried by mosquitoes in temperate climates, but the parasite disappears over the winter.

The disease is a major health problem in much of the tropics and subtropics. The American Center for Disease Control estimates that there are 300 million to 500 million cases of malaria each year, and more than 1 million people die from it. It presents a major disease hazard for travellers to warm climates.

In some areas of the world, mosquitoes that carry malaria have developed resistance to insecticides. In addition, the parasites have developed resistance to some antibiotics. These conditions have led to difficulty in controlling both the rate of infection and spread of this disease.

One continues to wonder why malaria has proved difficult to wipe out of Africa, and particularly Nigeria. However, from our studies carried out on this issue, many factors have been identified to be responsible for this pan-African problem, including:

- (a) The resistance of malaria plasmodium to some of the antimalarial drugs, even with the so-called combination therapy method of treatment;
- (b) Using the same type of insecticide chemicals to kill different strains of malaria parasites.

In view of this, insecticides manufactured to kill mosquitoes should be used in locations or areas depending on the types and strains of mosquitoes common in that locality. For instance, insecticides manufactured to be used on mosquitoes found in Ghana should have a varied chemical content compared to mosquitoes found in Nigeria because of geographical factors that actually affect the existence any living creature, including microorganisms, in any area at any given time.