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Island Nations Vow Action at 8th Asia Pacific Leaders' Summit on Malaria Elimination

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The 8th Asia Pacific Leaders' Summit on Malaria Elimination happening at Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea on 6th and 7th June, 2024



High-level leaders from across the Asia-Pacific region are gathering in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, for the 8th Asia Pacific Leaders' Summit on Malaria Elimination. Hosted by the Government of Papua New Guinea, in partnership with the Asia Pacific Leaders Malaria Alliance (APLMA), the two-day summit emphasises the critical role of health system investments, regional collaborations and innovative solutions in achieving the shared goal of malaria elimination by 2030.

Key regional and international organisations, including The Global Fund, the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) Partnership to End Malaria, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Global Institute for Disease Elimination (GLIDE), are acting as supporting partners for this pivotal event. Notably, the summit is the first of its kind to be held in Melanesia.

Experts at the gathering note concern over the surging malaria cases in 2022, which doubled in number for the first time in a decade and knocked Asia Pacific off-track on its 2030 elimination goal. To get back on track, strengthening collaboration across countries is crucial. This will help improve the effectiveness of programs, build technical expertise, and secure the necessary financial resources.

The Summit convenes leaders, including Hon James Marape, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea; Hon Dr Lino Tom, Minister for Health, Papua New Guinea, who chairs the event. Ministers of Health from Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu participate, alongside Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala, Regional Director of the World Health Organization, and Lady Roslyn Morauta, Chair of The Global Fund Board and former First Lady of Papua New Guinea graced the event as well.

In his keynote speach*, Prime Minister Hon James Marape* states, "The Leaders' Summit serves as a pivotal platform for advancing the agenda of malaria elimination in the Asia Pacific region and an opportune moment to reaffirm Papua New Guinea's political commitment towards Elimination of Malaria."

Despite impressive progress in recent years, malaria remains a substantial public health concern for vulnerable communities across Melanesia and the Asia-Pacific region. With support from The Global Fund, the RBM Partnership to End Malaria, the WHO, and GLIDE, the Summit tackles the challenge of malaria elimination by focusing on three key areas: sustaining financing, empowering communities, and bolstering political commitment to eliminate malaria in the Asia-Pacific.

Dr Saia Ma'u Piukala, World Health Organization Regional Director for the Western Pacific, states, "The Asia-Pacific is a region of immense diversity, but when it comes to malaria, we share a common struggle. In the Western Pacific, malaria continues to be a serious health threat, but we are making significant progress. This Summit is a critical opportunity for leaders across the nations to strengthen regional partnerships. WHO continues to support regional collaboration to eliminate this preventable illness."

"Malaria disproportionately affects the most vulnerable populations in the Asia-Pacific. A clear correlation exists between parasite prevalence and geographical location. This Summit reflects the powerful commitment of leaders from across Asia Pacific and the world. We are united in this fight, ensuring that no one is left behind as we strive towards a malaria-free future," emphasises *Dr Sarthak Das, CEO of the Asia Pacific Leaders Malaria Alliance (APLMA).*

The 8th Asia Pacific Leaders' Summit on Malaria Elimination is poised to be a transformative moment in the fight against the disease. This high-level meeting marks the genesis of a regional cooperation, culminating in the adoption of a Call-to-Action Statement to establish the Eliminating Malaria and other Vector Borne Diseases through Enhanced Regional Partnerships (EDEN) Initiative.

This landmark statement, to be signed by the Health Ministers of Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu, is expected to solidify a regional commitment to harnessing integrated approaches for the control and elimination of malaria and other relevant vector-borne diseases.

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