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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **U.S. Warns of Harm by Counterfeit Malaria Medication**

**Abuja, Nigeria** – Today, the United States government, through the U.S. President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), announced the launch of the "Make a Difference" hotline and reward program that will offer up to \$10,000 (approximately two million naira) for information concerning the illegal distribution of stolen and falsified anti-malaria medication in Nigeria. The announcement came as the world health community marked World Malaria Day and World Intellectual Property Day.

The U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria, James F. Entwistle, said, "Despite so many gains in malaria prevention and treatment, the widespread prevalence of counterfeit, substandard medicines is contributing to the alarmingly high number of malaria deaths and costs of health care in Nigeria."

An estimated 100 million malaria cases and about 300,000 deaths each year make Nigeria the country with the highest number of malaria casualties worldwide. According to the Nigerian National Malaria Strategic Plan 2014-2020, malaria is responsible for 60 percent of outpatient visits to health facilities, 30 percent of childhood deaths, 25 percent of deaths in children under one year, and 11 percent of maternal deaths.

The world health community continues to warn that the abundance of fake malaria medicines threatens the progress being made to control the disease. Stolen malaria medicines often transported or stored in sub-optimal conditions decay and become ineffective, putting patients at risk for treatment. Parasites, a by-product of this decay, cause malaria, potentially mutate, and grow resistant to the drug. Also, the production of counterfeit medicines takes money away from legitimate businesses and discourages growth in Nigeria's pharmaceutical industry, with a corresponding loss of goods and investment in the sector.

Globally, illicit proceeds from the sale of stolen or falsified anti-malaria medicine total more than \$60 million a year. USAID's Office of the Inspector General investigates the theft, diversion, and resale of U.S. government-funded anti-

malarial commodities throughout Africa in coordination with local law enforcement entities.

### About the President's Malaria Initiative and the "Make a Difference" Program

The contributions from the President's Malaria Initiative, through USAID, together with those of other partners in Nigeria, have dramatically improved coverage of key malaria control interventions, including use of insecticide-treated mosquito nets, indoor residual spraying, accurate diagnosis, prompt treatment, and intermittent preventive treatment of pregnant women.

In 2013, malaria led to 198 million illnesses and 584,000 deaths worldwide. More than 90 percent of all malaria deaths occur in sub-Saharan Africa and malaria continues to be a leading cause of child mortality.

The disease places a heavy burden on individual families and national health systems. It adversely affects worker productivity, drains household incomes, hinders educational development, and perpetuates poverty. Because most malaria transmission occurs in rural areas, the greatest burden of the disease usually falls on families who cannot afford the proper health care.

The "Make a Difference" program will inform the public about the dangers of using falsified and stolen medications, including how to avoid such medicines. Nigerians can make a difference in their community by reporting individuals involved in the manufacturing, distribution, or sale of these illicit and dangerous products. USAID's Office of the Inspector General is offering rewards for information concerning theft of anti-malaria drugs.

Individuals with information on these networks should call the toll-free hotline at 07080601816 or send an email to [MADMalariaHotline@usaid.gov](mailto:MADMalariaHotline@usaid.gov). All information will be kept confidential. Please note that if you wish to be considered for a reward, you will need to provide identifying information.

For additional information, please contact Josephine Kamara at [jkamara@usaid.gov](mailto:jkamara@usaid.gov)

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