

**Directorate of Information and Communication****Press release N°19/28th AU SUMMIT****The African Union launches Africa CDC, a Continent-wide Public Health Agency**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 31 January 2017– Friday 31 January marked the launch of Africa's continent-wide public health agency, the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), which will help African Member States respond to public health

emergencies. The importance of public health is underlined by the fact that it has an impact on national, social and economic development. Because of this importance, the African Union Assembly of Heads of State authorized an annual contribution from the overall African Union operating budget for 2016 to safeguard Africa's health.

The need for an Africa CDC to support African countries as they monitor and respond to public health threats was recognized by the African Union in 2013 and formalized in 2015. Guinea's President Alpha Conde, whose country was one of the Ebola affected states between 2013 and 2015 attended the launch ceremony in his capacity as the Chairperson of the African Union. He was accompanied by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Commissioner for Social Affairs Dr Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko and other senior officials of the Commission.

Since the African Union Ministers of Health meeting in Malabo adopted the Statute of the Africa CDC in July 2015 and urged the fast tracking of the establishment of the institution, much progress has been made. Five Regional Collaborating Centers to work with the African CDC Coordinating Center in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia have been selected. An Emergency Operations Center has been set up at the Addis Ababa headquarters and 10 highly qualified epidemiologists are ready to monitor for disease threats across the continent. The epidemiologists will be responsible for disease surveillance, investigations, analysis, and reporting trends and anomalies. A director, Dr John Nkengasong has been recruited and a governing board appointed.

The Africa CDC will join the international networks of public health institutions to share information and improve surveillance of public health threats. As an African-owned institution, the Africa CDC is uniquely positioned to help protect the health of the continent.

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