

## **Africa Union's Peace and Security Council discuss public health threats to the Continent**

*Urge integration of effective public health strategies in the African Union Peace and Security Architecture*



**Addis Ababa, 18 January 2017**-The Peace and Security Council of the African Union on Thursday discussed the health security threats faced by the Continent and agreed on joint strategies with the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) to respond to infectious disease outbreaks, fight antimicrobial resistance and address the increasing threat of non-communicable diseases on the continent. Article 6 of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union mandates the body to take a lead in humanitarian action and disaster management.

'Pathogens and epidemics do not respect political boundaries. A disease threat anywhere in Africa is a threat everywhere on the Continent. As such, leveraging and harnessing existing public health resources and assets through a multisectoral approach and

fostering strategic partnerships is critical to fight disease threats and safeguard the Continent' said Dr. John Nkengasong, the Director of the Africa CDC.

The Council recognized diseases as social, economic, and national security threat to the Continent and stressed the need to strengthen Africa's public health agenda within the African Union Peace and Security Architecture. The Ebola outbreak posed economic, security and social threats to the West Africa sub-region with soldiers being deployed on the streets to assist with the maintaining peace and security. The outbreak-devastated economies with the cost to West Africa by the end of 2015 estimated at 32.6 billion and 11,000 lives lost. Africa is also facing major threats of resistance to antibiotics with an estimated 4.1 million deaths per year and \$42 trillion loss to the African economy by 2050. Africa is experiencing huge challenges from the hidden epidemic of non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, cancers, respiratory diseases and diabetes.

The Council recommended that Africa CDC should work very closely with the African Union's military to further strengthen ongoing efforts in infectious disease pandemic preparedness and response, joint public health training on outbreak responses, logistics and supply chain management, regional stockpiles and strengthen health systems.

In the last two decades, the global health landscape has undergone rapid transformation. In Africa, emerging and re-emerging infectious disease threats are being driven by many factors: weak health systems, huge population growth expected to reach 2.5 billion by 2050, rapid urbanization, expansive mobility of people across and beyond the continent, climate change fueled by global warming, desertification and destruction of rain forests, and increased interaction between animals and humans.

'A major lesson from the Ebola outbreak is the need for the AU to put in place a medium to long-term programme to build Africa's capacity to deal with public health emergencies and threats in the future. The capacities and systems most needed, to prevent, detect and respond to public health threats must be reinforced in order to ensure that in the medium to long term, African countries attain and possess all International Health Regulations (IHR) capacities and systems' said Ambassador Abou Bakr Hefny, the Chairperson of the Africa Peace and Security Council and Permanent Representative of Egypt to the African Union,

In January 2017, the African Union strengthened its health architecture by launching the Africa CDC and its Regional Collaborating Centre in each of the five AU regions. Since then, the Africa CDC is in partnership with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other public health stakeholders strengthening National Public Health Institutes; establishing the Regional Integrated Surveillance and Laboratory Networks (RISLNET) that aims to harness the full public health assets in each region and enhance the capacity of national Ministries of Health and reference laboratories to detect, rapidly respond, and prevent infectious diseases. The Africa CDC has launched the Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance Network to fight antibiotic resistance across Africa and established rapid response surge teams at different levels to respond to outbreaks timeously and efficiently.

The Africa CDC has responded, in partnership with WHO and other public health stakeholders, to nine outbreaks in seven Member States including Lassa fever, Monkey pox virus and Meningitis in Nigeria, Malaria in Mozambique and Namibia, Ebola in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Cholera in Ethiopia and DRC, Plague in Madagascar, and mudslide in Sierra Leone.

For more information visit [www.africacdc.org](http://www.africacdc.org)

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**About the Africa CDC**

The Africa CDC supports all African countries to improve surveillance, emergency response, and prevention of infectious diseases. This includes addressing outbreaks, man-made and natural disasters, and public health events of regional and international concern. It further seeks to build the capacity to reduce disease burden on the continent.