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African Union Mobilizes Continent-Wide Response to COVID-19 Outbreak



ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, 24 FEBRUARY 2020. The Chairperson, African Union Commission, H.E. Mr Moussa Faki Mahamat, said that the Commission will strengthen partnerships and coordination across Africa to respond to the 2019 novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak.

“I would like to assure you of the firm resolve of the African Union Commission to establish the necessary synergy to maximize the impact of our actions to protect our continent from the ongoing coronavirus disease outbreak,” said H.E. Mahamat during the opening ceremony of the emergency meeting of the African Union Ministers of Health on COVID-19.

Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention

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Mr Mahamat said that, although Africa has reported only one case of COVID-19, the continent is already feeling the impact of the disease economically and socially.

“This epidemic is a human tragedy and it’s already paralyzing economic activities. We are feeling the effects already, because China, one of Africa’s economic partners, is affected. If we do not take urgent actions the socio-economic effects will be very huge on Africa and the rest of the world,” said H.E. Mahamat.

In his address to the meeting, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), said: “Our biggest concern continues to be the potential for COVID-19 to spread in countries with weaker health systems. Our regional office for Africa, in partnership with the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), is working hard to prepare African countries for the potential spread of the virus to Africa. We are calling on all countries to invest urgently in preparedness.”

During the meeting, Africa CDC presented an update about the situation of COVID-19 to the ministers, including the latest information regarding science, diagnosis, and management. The ministers discussed and agreed on a joint continental strategy to better prepare and respond to the disease, including a common approach for monitoring and movement restrictions of people at risk for COVID-19 and for information sharing.

“From the onset of the outbreak, the African Union has continued to share information with Member States through teleconferences by Africa CDC and through the Permanent Representative Committee and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. We will continue to provide a platform for the exchange of information to improve health systems in Africa,” said H.E. Mrs Amira Elfadil, Commissioner for Social Affairs, African Union Commission.

The ministers also discussed how to work together to develop and implement national preparedness plans, strengthen capacity, and stockpile personal protective equipment and quality-assured diagnostics with guidance and support from Africa CDC and WHO. They agreed to perform these tasks through the Africa Taskforce for Coronavirus (AFCOR), which was established by Africa CDC to share information and best practices, build technical capacity, support high-quality policy decisions, and coordinate detection and control at borders.

Following the meeting, Africa CDC and WHO will work with Member States and partners to provide comprehensive guidance on controlling COVID-19 and mobilizing more resources to support preparedness and response in the continent.

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About the Africa CDC...

The Africa CDC mission is to strengthen Africa's public health institution's capacities, capabilities and partnerships to detect and respond quickly and effectively to disease threats and outbreaks based on science, policy, and data-driven interventions and programmes.

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