

AFRICAN UNION

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**African Union Economic Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC)
Statement on the COVID-19 Pandemic**

1. As our continent – and much of the world – continues to grapple with the tremendous threat posed by the unprecedented COVID-19 (Coronavirus) global pandemic, ECOSOCC joins hands in solidarity with Africans across the continent in the fight against the spread of Coronavirus. We believe that the current pandemic represents more than just a passing health crisis. It enjoins us to draw on our African solidarity encapsulated in the spirit of *Ubuntu* to work together as humanity.
2. ECOSOCC today recognizes that the current crisis imposes an urgent need for our continent to acknowledge and address the vulnerabilities in our public health systems and to build resilient systems that can position our continent to more effectively combat future epidemic or pandemic outbreaks.
3. We believe that the relative inadequacy of health systems and the adverse economic conditions on the continent constitute factors of major vulnerability in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic. As different response frameworks are rolled out across the continent, we urge policy makers at all levels to ensure that the poor and vulnerable are not left to bear the brunt of this disease.
4. We commend the work of the Africa Centres for Disease Control (Africa CDC), the World Health Organization and Ministries of Health across Africa that have activated Emergency Operations Centers and Incident Management Systems (IMS) for the COVID-19 pandemic response.
5. We commit to support efforts towards public communication during this pandemic, and urge all Africans to adhere to all the public health protocols put in place to ensure the health and safety of African citizens.
6. ECOSOCC strongly urges the African Union Commission, AU Member States and Africa CDC to strengthen their joint efforts to ensure an effective halt to the spread of COVID-19. In addition:
 - a) We call upon all Africans to rigorously follow the advice and guidelines of Africa CDC, the World Health Organization (WHO) and their national Ministries of

Health to help keep one another healthy and free from infection, including committing to practicing good hand-washing techniques and following social distancing rules.

- b) We encourage the African people to educate themselves and their loved ones about this pandemic. Action starts with learning the facts about the COVID-19 and the personal and public health measures we can all adopt to keep ourselves safe and protect those around us.
 - c) We call upon AU Member States and development stakeholders to urgently build capabilities to conduct mass testing and treatment and make them available to all citizens.
 - d) Member States are further entreated to facilitate subsidized access to critical supplies including masks, sanitizers, and food aid for vulnerable groups including displaced persons and populations experiencing conflict.
 - e) Governments across the continent are urged to allocate emergency resources to finance quarantine costs in order to mitigate the risk of citizens not reporting symptoms to public health authorities out of a concern for the cost of quarantine.
 - f) The African Union Commission through Africa CDC should work with development partners to consider putting in place a contingency fund to offer concrete support for frontline health workers all over the continent. Access to personal protective equipment (PPE) for health workers is a first concrete step and other practical measures must be considered, including; provision of food, rest, family support and psychological support for healthcare workers. Presently, health-care workers are every country's most valuable resource.
 - g) We call upon the African Union Commission and AU Member States to work with employers, especially in the private sector, to institute emergency measures that protect citizens from the effects of temporary unemployment caused by enforced work stoppages and guarantee basic income for all affected citizens.
7. We urgently call upon all ECOSOCC National Chapters to join the fight against coronavirus by sensitizing the African citizenry about COVID-19 and how to stay safe from infection; engaging elected officials at the community, national and continental level to support the deployment of effective public health interventions; and sharing updates from Africa CDC and World Health Organization throughout their national networks.
8. ECOSOCC commits to expanding its public information campaign about COVID-19 to ensure that as many African citizens as possible are adequately informed about this pandemic and have access to the information and guidance necessary to prevent the spread of infection on the African continent.

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