

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

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African Union and Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention launch Partnership to Accelerate COVID-19 Testing: Trace, Test and Track

The African Union Commission and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) have launched a new initiative, the Partnership to Accelerate COVID-19 Testing (PACT): Trace, Test & Track (CDC-T3). The partnership is to facilitate implementation of the Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19, endorsed by African Ministers of Health on 22 February 2020 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and approved by the Bureau of the Assembly of the African Union Heads of State and Government on 26 March 2020.

Driven by the principles of cooperation, coordination, collaboration and communication, the goal of the continental strategy is to prevent severe illness and death from COVID-19 infection in African Union Member States and minimize social disruption and the economic consequences of COVID-19.

PACT aims to strengthen capacity to test for COVID-19 across Africa, with emphasis on countries that have only minimal capacity. This will ensure that at least 10 million Africans, who would have not been tested, get tested in the next six months.

PACT will help meet the need of the Heads of State and Government for an Africa-led and Africa-owned response. It will focus on:

- a. Establishment of warehousing and distribution hubs across Africa, in partnership with organizations like the World Food Programme and Ethiopian Airlines. This model has been used to successfully distribute medical supplies and donations from the Abiy Ahmed/Jack Ma Foundation Initiative to Reverse COVID-19 of the Prime Minister of Ethiopia and the Founder of Alibaba, respectively;
- b. Coordination of pooled procurement of diagnostics and other medical commodities for distribution across the continent;
- c. Support for the testing of one million Africans in 10 weeks;
- d. Support for the deployment of one million community healthcare workers to support contact tracing; and
- e. Standardization and deployment of common technology platforms to boost public trust in testing data, epidemiological models and critical health forecasting techniques as part of the economic recovery and re-opening agenda.

Accelerated COVID-19 tracing, testing and outcomes tracking in Africa is key to the achievement of the first pillar of the continental strategy, which aims to limit

transmission and slow the spread of the pandemic, whilst laying the foundation for accelerated socio-economic recovery that should bring the Africa integration agenda back on track.

PACT requires well-coordinated actions and a broad array of partnerships at all strategic levels as directed by the Bureau of the African Union Heads of State and Government.

Therefore, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Mr Moussa Faki Mahamat is calling on all partners to support the expanded COVID-19 testing strategy for Africa.

Dr James Mwangi, Group Chief Executive Officer of Pan-African Bank, Equity Group Holdings, and a member of AfroChampions said "As businesses, we are nothing without a healthy and productive workforce. I cannot express in words the gratitude many of us feel for the renewed mandate of Africa CDC from the African Union to accelerate testing through the PACT initiative so that we can more effectively treat our compatriots who have succumbed to this disease. We need everyone to join us to mitigate the effects of this virus in Africa."

PACT will be coordinated and led by Africa CDC, in close collaboration with the Africa Task Force for Coronavirus (AFTCOR). Subsidiary initiatives shall cover the technology dimension, social marketing and communications, knowledge sharing and dissemination, among others. AfroChampions, the pan-African business leadership network, is a strategic partner for mobilising the continental private sector in support of the subsidiary initiatives.

Africa CDC, with the mandate of the African Union Commission, shall embark on multi-stakeholder partnerships to advance this and other subsidiary initiatives, to ensure broad endorsement and support across Africa, among institutions, and among the African people.

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