

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

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African Union rolls out Partnership to Accelerate COVID-19 Testing

The Commissioner for Social Affairs, H.E. Mrs Amira Elfadil Mohammed, today rolled out the Partnership to Accelerate COVID-19 Testing (PACT) at the African Union Commission headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

In his message to participants in the rollout event, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, said: "We have set four goals for PACT: to scale up testing for COVID-19, to continue training healthcare workers on the continent, to establish a platform for pooled procurement at Africa CDC, and to deploy one million community workers who will help trace contacts of confirmed cases. PACT is a vital component of the continental response to COVID-19 and it is the key to ensuring that we unlock our economies in a safe manner."

Anchored on the African Union Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 endorsed by Africa health ministers and the Bureau of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, PACT is an initiative to help prevent transmission and deaths, and minimize the social and economic harm due to COVID-19. It seeks to implement well-coordinated actions and strong partnerships to strengthen the effectiveness of response across Africa.

"Until today there is no treatment or vaccine for COVID-19. This leaves us with only prevention, and when it comes to prevention our choices are limited. We must prevent more transmission by doing more testing and tracing and this is what PACT is about. That is why we are supporting Member States to do more testing, to trace, and to identify and isolate infected persons. In this way we will be able to control the virus and limit transmission on the continent," said H.E. Amira Elfadil Mohammed, Commissioner for Social Affairs, African Union Commission.

PACT has three key components: Test, Trace and Treat. Testing to diagnose cases, tracing to identify cases and their contacts, and treating to provide treatment and supportive care to cases.

"The intention of PACT is to focus on some specific aspects of the response that we must do very quickly. We want to test so we can find where the virus is hiding in the community. When we test, we expect to see more cases and we must trace the contacts and treat those who are infected, otherwise the testing will be of no value," said Dr John Nkengasong, Director of Africa CDC.

With a population of about 1.2 billion, Africa has recorded more than 150,000 cases of COVID-19 and conducted just about 2.4 million tests. To achieve its testing goal of 8000 tests per million population, Africa needs to intensify testing to identify and isolate

cases and trace their contacts, and this requires huge resources that cannot be mobilized without the strong partnerships that PACT will facilitate.

“PACT is the game changer that will help capacitate Africa and enable it to build the strong partnerships needed to mobilize resources and support to defeat COVID-19 on the continent,” said Dr John Nkengasong.

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