

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission Celebrates Humanitarian Workers on the Occasion of the World Humanitarian Day 19 August 2020

19 August 2020, Addis Ababa: The Chairperson of the African Union Commission **H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat** pays tribute to the real life heroes of health workers, first responders and all humanitarian workers working harder than before as they perform extraordinary life-saving work while risking their lives for all of us during these extraordinary times of the global Covid19 pandemic.

On this occasion of the the World Humanitarian Day, the Chairperson pays tribute to all humanitarian workers in Africa and throughout the world, who are the real-life heroes and heroines as they continue to work tirelessly and commit their lives to saving lives in dangerous, difficult and challenging conditions. Many have faced extreme risks such as being wounded, kidnapped and even paying the ultimate price in the line of duty. The 2020 World Humanitarian Day comes at a time as the continent and and the world at large face unprecedented challenges due to the massive negative impact and pressure of COVID-19 pandemic on our health, safety and wellbeing.

The Chairperson paid specific and special tribute to the health workers including AU health volunteers working to support Member States through the continental response led by the AU technical agency for public health emergencies, Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC). He also recognized the dedication and care of communities themselves who, due to the restrictions on movement, have become the first responders and unsung heroes of this pandemic, showing that solidarity and unity during these extraordinary times, are the most potent weapon against the virus.

The Chairperson noted that today Africa is home to 27 million forcibly displaced persons, of which 19.2 million are internally displaced persons and 7.8million are refugees and asylum seekers. He acknowledged that the COVID-19 has added immense challenges to the already existing humanitarian needs that countries across the continent are facing.

The Chairperson therefore condemns in the strongest terms, all attacks against humanitarian and aid workers stating that such attacks violate international norms and called for urgent investigation and accountability as well as better protection for front line workers. He thanked AU Member States who continue to host refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and stateless persons within their borders in the spirit of solidarity and Pan-Africanism. He urged the international community to share responsibility and provide the

much-needed support to countries and communities that are hosting large numbers of displaced people.

Recalling the 2020 AU theme on ***Silencing the Guns: Creating conducive conditions for Africa's development***, the Chairperson reiterated his call for an unconditional ceasefire in all countries experiencing conflicts, so that governments and communities can devote their resources and energy to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. He reiterated the readiness of the AU to support such efforts.

In this regard, he urged all AU Member States that have not yet done so to ratify, domesticate and implement the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugees in Africa and the 2009 African Union Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons.