

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

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Africa CDC Director Awarded the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Global Goalkeeper Award for 2020 for role in fighting COVID 19

The Director of the African Union's Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, AfricaCDC, Dr John Nkengasong, has been awarded the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) 2020 Global Goalkeeper Award.

The award celebrates an established individual (or group) who has demonstrated commitment to the global development goals through impactful work during or in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in their country and/or globally. It was handed over by Dr Solomon Zewdu, the Deputy Director for Health at the BMGF at a small ceremony at the African Union headquarters. In attendance virtually were the Commissioner of Social Affairs at the African Union Commission, AUC, H.E Amira El Fadil, and Mr Cheikh Oumar Seydi, the Africa Director at the BMGF.

On behalf of the Chairperson of the AUC, H.E. Mr Moussa Faki Mahamat, Commissioner Amira congratulated the 2020 winner and paid tribute to him for his leadership, dedication, passion, patience, engagement with other public health officials, building of partnerships, and coordination of member states in the continental COVID19 response.

"After working with you for the past four years, I can attest that you deserve this award and that you are really a goalkeeper" the Commissioner said.

In his acceptance speech, Dr Nkengasong paid tribute to the leadership of the African Union, particularly the Chair of the AU Commission Mr Moussa Faki Mahamat, the Chair of the AU, President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa and Commissioner Amira, for their "unwavering support for the Africa CDC, and their leadership in the COVID19 response".

He also thanked the BMGF for the "truly remarkable partnership with AfricaCDC, right from the beginning". He said this early support showed the foundation's faith in the vision and wisdom of Africa's Heads of State and Government in charting and creating a continental public health institute. He also recognised all the other partners working with the AfricaCDC, his team at the AfricaCDC and his family.

While acknowledging the successes achieved by the continent, including the current trend of reduced rate of COVID19 infections in many of the regions, the AfricaCDC Director cautioned that the fight against the disease is far from over, and called for continued strong partnerships, solidarity and unity of purpose among member states.

“We are fighting a war, a war that we have to win as a continent. This is the moment for Africa to come together, coordinate and cooperate in order to survive”, he said.

Representing the BMGF, Mr Cheikh Oumar Seydi commented “We are here today because you, Dr. Nkengasong, are making big things happen, you are making progress happen, you truly embody what it means to be a Global Goalkeeper. And we at the Foundation are immensely honoured to award you the 2020 Global Goalkeeper Award”.

A message from Bill and Melinda Gates, read, in part, “You are an important and central voice for Africa’s medical community, but more broadly, your collaborative work across continents and your advocacy for equitable healthcare for all, demonstrates exactly what it means to be a Goalkeeper”.

Other attendees to the award ceremony included the Deputy Director at the AfricaCDC, Dr Ahmed Ogwel, and Heads of Division and staff members from the AfricaCDC and the Directorate of Information and Communication.

For further media inquiries, please contact:

1. Ms. Wynne Musabayana | Head of Communication Division| Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission | E-mail: MUSABAYANAW@africa-union.org |
2. Mr. Gamal Ahmed A. Karrar | Senior Communication Officer| Directorate of Information and Communication, African Union Commission | E-mail: GamalK@africa-union.org

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