

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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Covid-19 Pandemic, Insecurity and Instability, and Socio-Economic development of the continent among others, at the centre of discussion: 40th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union.

Addressing the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the increasing threats of insecurity from conflicts and terrorism, the unconstitutional changes of governments in African states and the socio-economic development on the continent, dominated the discussions of the Executive Council session of the African Union. The two-day session of the African Ministers of Foreign Affairs kicked off today, 2 February 2022, at the Headquarters of the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, convening physically for the first time since the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020.



Vaccination against COVID-19 on the continent remains very low. Only 10% of the African population have completed a full vaccination cycle, while 11% are partially vaccinated. We remain convinced that the production of vaccines in Africa, already quite advanced in some of our Member States, will facilitate the reversal of this negative trend by making vaccines readily available to the vast majority of our populations. Enhancing access to the vaccines for all African citizens remains a priority of the Union. Several African states have undertaken to produce vaccines, a development that is expected to be complemented by the operationalization of the [African Medical Agency](#) (AMA). AMA will enhance the capacity of State Parties and Regional Economic Communities to regulate and improve access to quality, safe and

efficacious medical products on the continent. Other mechanisms that have been put in place to support the COVID-19 containment measures, are the establishment of the [African Vaccine Acquisition Trust](#) (AVAT) as a centralized purchasing agent on behalf of the African Union for Member States, to secure the necessary vaccines and blended financing resources for achieving Africa's COVID-19 vaccination strategy, which targets vaccinating a minimum of 60% of Africa's population. The process of the full operationalization of the [Africa CDC](#), will also strengthen the Union's capacity to support member states public health institutions to detect, prevent, control and respond quickly and effectively to disease threats.

The socio economic impact of the pandemic has translated into a recession witnessed for the first time in decades, and has led to rising inflation and debt burden on member states. Speaking at the opening ceremony of the Executive Council, H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC) noted that the continent needs 154 billion dollars to effectively respond to the economic crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. His statement was echoed by the Executive Secretary of the UNECA H.E. Vera Songwe, who highlighted the depressed economic growth, high level of unemployment and the increasing number of states debt distress. She stated "the economic cost of managing the pandemic has been high. Debt to GDP has risen from 40% in 2014 to almost 70% today. While in 2014, only 4 African countries were in high risk of debt distress, today 17 countries are in high risk of debt distress. Already, 4 countries are in debt distress."

Africa has in recent months witnessed a democratic recession in several member states following the unconstitutional changes of government through coup d'état. This has posed grave security and stability concerns for the regions and the continent, coupled with threats of terrorism, conflicts and weak governance, which remain a threat to the humanitarian situation in Africa and the fragility of States. H.E. Faki observed that "The threats are revealed in several forms: intra-state conflicts, the spread of deadly terrorism in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes regions and southern Africa, with a stated desire to destabilize States largely weakened by deficiencies in political, economic and social governance. The resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government that have dangerously multiplied in recent month. The combined effects of these various negative factors with those linked to degradation of the environment due to climate change, are generating large flows of refugees and internally displaced persons, bringing humanitarian concerns to the forefront".

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Senegalese Abroad, H.E. Aïssata Tall Sall, who was chairing the Executive Council in the absence of the Chair, H.E Christophe Apala Lutundula, from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), underscored that the resurgence of the unconstitutional changes of government are undermining the foundation of African states and the efforts for development on the continent. She stated, "I remain optimistic that the Summit will make the leaders of our continent renew their commitment, and give the future generation a peaceful and integrated Africa that is focused on socio-economic progress. The African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), the [African Governance Architecture](#) (AGA); the [Agenda 2063](#) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), constitute levers for the

continent to emerge from poverty and under-development, which are sources of instability on the continent.”



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As the African Union embarks on the implementation of activities under the 2022 theme of the year “[Building Resilience in Nutrition on the African Continent: Accelerate the Human Capital, Social and Economic Development](#)”, the importance of focusing on nutrition was highlighted. Literature shows that almost 1 in 5 Africans go hungry every day, the number of hungry people on the continent reached 282 million people in 2020 and the development of millions of children is threatened due to malnutrition, and whose negative effects will be felt for years to come. African economies similarly, lose 3% -16% of GDP annually due to malnutrition. With the rising food prices and the low purchasing power for many Africans, the threat of social unrest becomes more pronounced. In the implementation of the theme of the year 2022, addressing malnutrition on the continent will leverage on several ongoing flagship projects and activities of the African Union such the African Continental Free Trade Area, the Free movement of Persons, education and innovation, among others.

The two-day Ministerial meeting that precedes the Assembly of Heads of State and Government scheduled to hold on the 5th – 6th February 2022, will discuss a host of issues including the Financing of the Union and the Scale of Assessment and Contributions for member states; African Candidatures within the International System; the Implementation of Agenda 2063; the Institutional Reforms; Gender and youth parity and efforts towards ending violence against women and girls; education, science and innovation; updates on the situation in the Pan African Parliament (PAP); the election of members of the AU Peace and Security Council among others. See Agenda Programme [here](#). The Ministers will also adopt the report of the 43rd Ordinary

Session of the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) held virtually on 20 and 21 January 2022.

2022 also marks the 20th anniversary, since the African Union was officially launched in 2002, as a successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

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