



**COMMUNIQUE OF THE VIDEO-TELECONFERENCE (VTC) MEETING OF THE
BUREAU OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE AFRICAN UNION (AU) HEADS OF
STATE AND GOVERNMENT WITH CHAIRPERSONS OF THE REGIONAL
ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES (RECs) OF THE AFRICAN UNION HELD ON 11
JUNE 2020**

His Excellency, President Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa of the Republic of South Africa, and Chairperson of the African Union (AU) convened a video-teleconference Meeting of the Bureau of the Assembly of African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government with the Chairpersons of the AU Regional Economic Communities (RECs) on 11 June 2020.

The Meeting was held to consider reports of the AU Special Envoys, regarding economic relief measures and pooled procurement of medical supplies for Member States in the fight against COVID-19. The Meeting also provided a platform for the Chairpersons of the RECs to update the Bureau on measures and coordination efforts that have been undertaken since the last meeting on 29 April 2020.

All Members of the Bureau of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government participated in the Meeting as follows: His Excellency, President Félix Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of Congo, His Excellency, President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt, His Excellency, President Uhuru Muigi Kenyatta of the Republic of Kenya, and His Excellency President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta of the Republic of Mali.

Seven (7) Regional Economic Communities (RECs) of the AU were represented in the Meeting as follows:

- Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), His Excellency Dr Tehindrazanarivelo Djacoba A.S. Oliva, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Madagascar who participated on behalf of COMESA Chair and the President of the Republic of Madagascar, His Excellency President Andry Rajoelina;
- East African Community (EAC), Chaired by His Excellency President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda;
- Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Chaired by His Excellency President Ali Bongo of the Republic of Gabon;
- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Chaired by His Excellency President Issoufou Mahamadou of the Republic of Niger;
- Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Chaired by His Excellency Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok of the Republic of Sudan;
- Community of Sahel–Saharan States (CEN–SAD), His Excellency Mr. Mahamat Zene Cherif, Minister of Foreign Affairs, who participated on behalf of His Excellency President Idriss Deby Itno of the Republic of Chad; and
- Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), His Excellency Mr Mohammed Taher Sayila, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Libya who participated on behalf of the Chairman of the Presidential Council of Libya and Prime Minister of the Government of National Accord (GNA), Mr Fayez Mustafa al-Sarraj of the Libyan Arab Republic.

The following Head of States also participated in the meeting; namely, President of Ethiopia, His Excellency Sahle-Work Zewde; President of Senegal and the current Co-Chair of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), His Excellency Macky Sall and President of Zimbabwe, His Excellency Emmerson Mnangagwa.

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, and the Director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), Dr John Nkengasong, also participated in the teleconference Meeting.

The AU Special Envoys, namely, Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala of Nigeria, Dr Donald Kaberuka of Rwanda, Mr Benkhalfa Abderrahmane of Algeria, Mr. Trevor Manuel of South Africa and Mr. Tidjane Thiam of Côte d'Ivoire, Professor Mbaya Kankwenda from the DRC, and Mr. Strive Masiyiwa from Zimbabwe, also participated in the meeting.

The Heads of States and Government observed a moment of silence following the untimely passing on of President Pierre Nkurunziza of the Republic of Burundi and expressed their deepest condolences to his family, the Government and the people of the Republic of Burundi.

Briefing on the implementation of the Continental COVID-19 strategy

The Heads of State and Government welcomed the comprehensive briefing by the AUC Chairperson, HE Moussa Faki Mahamat, which highlighted the initiatives undertaken by the AUC in response to the COVID 19 pandemic, which included a meeting to be held on 24-25 June 2020 with continental stakeholders including researchers, civil society and policy makers to elaborate a Continental framework with regard to the research and development of a COVID19 vaccine, its clinical trials and access modalities. They reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of the AU Continental COVID-19 strategy and expressed their appreciation for the sterling work of the Commission as well as Africa CDC.

The Heads of State and Government welcomed the epidemiological briefing by Dr John Nkengasong, director of Africa-CDC on the current status of the outbreak in the Continent and expressed concern about the increased infection rate reported since the last update on 29 April 2020, including approximately over 200,000 confirmed infections and more than 5,000 deaths. Of the 200, 000 confirmed cases in the Continent, 61% of them are from Algeria, South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt and Ghana. They further took note of the recommendation of the Africa CDC; to increase Member States' capacity to test, trace and treat and, adequately absorb the surge in infections, as well as clinical care capacity. They expressed support for Africa CDC's emphasis on vaccine research, equity, and accessibility of treatments and therapeutics.

Updates from RECs on measures undertaken to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic

The Heads of State and Government expressed their deep appreciation to the Bureau of the Assembly of the AU for its initiatives in combating the scourge of the COVID-19 pandemic, which have begun to bear fruit. Likewise, they commended the sterling work, which has been undertaken by the RECs thus far and reaffirmed their commitment to continue to enhance existing coordination mechanisms between the AU and the RECs in fighting the virus on the Continent.

Update report by the Special Envoys on economic relief measures

The Heads of State and Government welcomed the report presented by the Special Envoys, especially on the critical areas of advocacy, resource mobilization and debt relief. They reaffirmed the importance of economic relief measures to mitigate socio-economic challenges posed by the virus.

On the mobilization of resources, the Heads of State and Government expressed their appreciation to the Special Envoys for the formidable work they have engaged in with international financial organisations regarding economic relief measures for Africa. In particular, they welcomed commitments amounting USD\$30 billion that the Special Envoys had managed to mobilise thus far out of the USD\$ 53 billion in pledges from these financial organisations as a result of the AU Special Envoys' efforts.

The Heads of State and Government further took note of the extensive progress the Special Envoys have made in consultations with the G-20 countries and China aimed at debt relief and debt moratorium. They encouraged the Special Envoys to continue their advocacy and vigorously make the case on behalf of the Continent in the face of the unprecedented global shock presented Covid19 and for the prolongation of the moratorium on debt repayments to 4 years to enable countries on the Continent to recover and jumpstart their economies in a sustainable manner beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Heads of State and Government reiterated their call for debt cancellation and the implementation of a comprehensive relief package for African countries in response to COVID-19. They pledged their unwavering political support to the overall work of the Special Envoys.

The Heads of State and Government further reaffirmed their strong solidarity with Sudan and Zimbabwe, and reiterated their calls for the lifting of sanctions against Sudan and Zimbabwe in order to enable these fraternal republics to adequately deal with the spread of COVID 19 pandemic in their countries.

Launch of Africa Medical Supplies Procurement Platform

The Heads of State and Government welcomed with appreciation the excellent progress achieved in the implementation of the Africa Medical Supplies Platform, particularly the success in the negotiation for access to high quality medical supplies at competitive prices. To that end, they took note of the partnership that had been forged with various countries including China, Canada, The Netherlands, South Korea and France, that has facilitated the supply of urgently needed medical equipment and supplies such as ventilators, PPEs and test kits as needed on the Continent. Local suppliers from the continent have also been added on the platform.

They noted with appreciation the significant contribution made by the People's Republic of China to this effort, including setting aside a portion of its manufacturing capacity to ensure the supply of 30 million testing kits, 10,000 ventilators and 80 million masks each month for the Continent. Member States of the AU were encouraged to place orders and take advantage of the economies of scale that the pooled Africa Medical procurement platform was offering.

The Heads of State and Government unanimously endorsed the launch of Africa Medical Supplies procurement platform and hailed it as a truly Pan-African Initiative aimed at the procurement, coordination and distribution of medical supplies for all AU member states.

The killing of Mr. George Floyd

The Heads of State and Government reaffirmed their strong condemnation of all forms of racism and condemned in the strongest terms the heinous killing of Mr. George Floyd in the United States of America. They expressed their solidarity with all people of African descent and the Diaspora, who routinely face discrimination and harassment in various parts of the world.

Way forward and closure

The Heads of State and Government expressed their profound appreciation to the President of the Republic of South Africa, and Chairperson of the AU, His Excellency Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa, for his leadership in steering the Organisation during these trying times. They further thanked President Ramaphosa for convening Meetings of the Assembly of the Bureau with the Chairpersonship of the RECs of the AU.

The Bureau of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government endorsed the convening of a virtual 2nd Mid-Year Coordination Meeting in July 2020.

Ends.