



Union des Conseils Economiques et Sociaux et Institutions Similaires d'Afrique
Union of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions of Africa
اتحاد المجالس الاقتصادية والاجتماعية والمؤسسات المماثلة في أفريقيا

Appeal from the Union of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions of Africa (UCESA) faced with the Covid-19 pandemic

Africa like the other continents is suffering from the health, economic and social shocks caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The consequences of this pandemic are likely to be dramatic for the people of Africa, especially the vulnerable who are not covered by social protection systems.

The economies of African countries are also threatened by a recession due mainly to the reduction in growth of their partners, the collapse of commodity prices, a significant drop in remittances from African workers abroad and shrinking of tourist activity. The urban sectors of the economy (manufacturing and services), which currently account for 64% of Africa's GDP, will be severely influenced by the effects of Covid-19, resulting in substantial losses of productive jobs. According to the African Union (AU), 22 million jobs are threatened in the formal and informal sectors. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) estimates that Covid-19 could reduce Africa's export earnings by nearly \$100 billion US in 2020.

In order to effectively combat this pandemic, UCESA as the umbrella union of organized African civil societies recommends a regional approach which takes into account the specificities of African societies and is based on the continent's own values in terms of solidarity and mutual aid. In particular, UCESA would like to commend the precautions and support undertaken by African countries despite budgetary constraints and a limited public health capability.

UCESA also wishes to salute the commitment of African leaders to establishing an operational framework to support African states in coping with the Covid-19 pandemic.

UCESA is launching this appeal to the AU, Regional Economic Communities, African governments and all partners to focus its view of African civil society on the values to be reinforced and the actions to be undertaken to support Africans suffering from the multiple effects of this crisis on a daily basis.

We, the representatives of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions in Africa, members of UCESA, acknowledge that:

1. Management of this crisis calls for a strong international response, guided by the imperative of solidarity and shared responsibility, which must urgently include the African continent and consider its specificities, especially at the economic and social levels.
2. The response capability of the majority of African countries has been weakened by the policies of austerity which have had a structural and negative impact on the health sector, through largely inadequate infrastructure and investment, doctors emigrating, manifest weakness of medical coverage and innovation in this sector, etc.
3. This capability to respond to Covid-19 has also been weakened in countries plagued by terrorism that are forced to redefine or redirect their priorities by strengthening the security component, often to the detriment of the health sector.
4. Given the weakness of basic social services (water, electricity, housing, health system, etc.), some of the measures to prevent Covid-19 will be difficult to apply, such as confinement and social distancing, even more so since the informal sector employs almost 80% of the population.

We salute:

1. The speed of African countries' reaction to this pandemic in accepting the advice and recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO) by adopting progressive prevention measures (state of emergency, confinement, wearing masks, etc.).
2. The efforts made by African governments to fight the spread of the novel coronavirus and mitigate its socio-economic impact by creating special funds (emergency, response and solidarity) amounting to several billion dollars, as well as the dedicated response of African researchers and industrialists to provide adapted local solutions and treatment or vaccination avenues (artificial respirators manufactured, millions of protective masks produced every day, solutions and protocols developed locally).
3. The mobilization and dedication of caregivers and the medical profession aimed at treating the sick and combating the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the commitment of possessors of local African customs and traditions by assisting State officials, all concentrating on combining national efforts in this struggle.
4. The surge of solidarity and contributions of the private sector, foundations, civil society, the world of sport and the arts to support people in their fight against the health and economic crisis caused by the coronavirus.
5. The AU's commitment to support a coordinated continent-wide response and the appointment of special envoys to mobilize the international community in support of Africa.
6. The call to action of the AU Commission, ECA, Afreximbank and the Afro-Champions Initiative for the development of a concerted and coordinated response, drawing in particular on the ZLECAf (African Free-trade Zone) as a tool to develop national, regional and continental value and supply chains.
7. The announcement by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on April 13, 2020, to reduce the debt of 19 African countries.

8. The commitment of partners on the African continent (AfDB, World Bank, Paris Club, EU, G20, China) to support African countries, as well as the FAO and the AU, to protect the continent's food security when faced by the crisis.
9. The support from the AU and certain foundations through the distribution of screening kits and protective clothing equipment.
10. The actions showing solidarity between African countries, such as Morocco's to reopen the military hospital in the Malian capital to receive patients infected with coronavirus.
11. Any African or international contribution which would enable support to be brought to the African continent to face this pandemic.

We are appealing for:

1. Strengthened international partnerships to mitigate the pandemic's impact on the African continent and increase resilience capability.
2. Participation in the dynamics of action-oriented regional solidarity initiatives like the initiative launched by His Majesty King Mohammed VI in consultation with the other African Heads of State including Presidents Macky SALL and Alassane OUATTARA, which aims to establish a scientific and operational framework for coordinated management of the pandemic.
3. Support for the ECOWAS assistance plan, the regional plan to enlarge the capacity of health systems for handling WAEMU epidemics and any other regional initiatives aimed at strengthening coordination between African countries, through health and economic plans.
4. Launch of a joint discussion, in consultation with African civil society organizations and other umbrella organizations, on health policies and the struggle against pandemics by considering the development of opinions for the benefit of all States.
5. Investment in the health sector to be placed as a top priority of States with a view to creating a substantial increase in reception capacity of hospitals, ensuring good care for contaminated people and ultimately protection of the long-term health of all citizens.
6. Support for implementation of the Research and Innovation Strategy for the Health Sector in Africa (HRISA) 2018-2030, which is part of the AU Agenda 2063 and a logical component of the 'United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
7. Capitalizing on the continent's history with regard to epidemic management and taking necessary measures to control circulation of the virus using appropriate containment mechanisms and barrier rules, in order to mitigate social impact, particularly on most vulnerable citizens and to support local businesses.
8. Giving particular importance to universal social protection by building on existing or innovative targeting and distribution mechanisms.
9. Installing specific support measures to encourage agriculture, forestry and grazing production and ensure food self-sufficiency, while ensuring that technical cooperation in agricultural matters is also strengthened.
10. Enlarged scientific cooperation between African countries and participation by the African diaspora in placing the continent in the global value chains of medical and pharmaceutical innovation.

11. Increased resources allocated to research in the fields of human and animal health in order to find effective remedies and vaccines against the pathologies affecting Africans in particular and enlarged capacity of pharmaceutical industries on the continent.
12. Learning lessons in pandemic management for a long-term drive of pan-African mobilization, by adopting public economic and social strategies, with the support of the private sector and civil society, for the benefit of African citizens.
13. Strengthened African regional integration while advocating co-development as a mode of action. This possesses multiple advantages when meeting common challenges and promoting existing potential through transfer and sharing of skills and technology, acceleration of digitalization, wealth creation and investment in innovation.
14. Strengthen the coordinating role of the AU in crisis management, especially in the fields of health and the environment.

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