

Media Update

20 May 2020

United Nations

SECRETARY-GENERAL MESSAGE

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

STATEMENT ON THE LAUNCH OF UNITED NATIONS POLICY BRIEF ON THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON AFRICA (20 May 2020)

As COVID-19 spreads across the continent, Africa has responded swiftly to the pandemic, and as of now reported cases are lower than feared. Even so, much hangs in the balance.

In recent years Africans have done much to advance the well-being of the continent's people. Economic growth has been strong. The digital revolution has taken hold. A free trade area has been agreed.

But the pandemic threatens African progress. It will aggravate long-standing inequalities and heighten hunger, malnutrition and vulnerability to disease. Already, demand for Africa's commodities, tourism and remittances are declining. The opening of the trade zone has been pushed back – and millions could be pushed into extreme poverty.

The virus has taken more than 2500 African lives. Vigilance and preparedness are critical.

I commend what African countries have done already, together with the African Union.

Most have moved rapidly to deepen regional coordination, deploy health workers, and enforce quarantines, lockdowns and border closures.

They are also drawing on the experience of HIV/AIDS and Ebola to debunk rumours and overcome mistrust of government, security forces and health workers.

I express my total solidarity with the people and governments of Africa in tackling COVID-19.

United Nations agencies, country teams, peacekeeping operations and humanitarian workers are providing support.

United Nations solidarity flights have delivered millions of test kits, respirators and other supplies, reaching almost the entire continent.

The policy brief we are issuing today highlights a spectrum of urgent challenges.

We are calling for international action to strengthen Africa's health systems, maintain food supplies, avoid a financial crisis, support education, protect jobs, keep households and businesses afloat, and cushion the continent against lost income and export earnings.

African countries should also have quick, equal and affordable access to any eventual vaccine and treatment, that must be considered global public goods

I have been calling for a global response package amounting to at least 10 per cent of the world's Gross Domestic Product. For Africa, that means more than \$200 billion as additional support from the international community.

I also continue to advocate a comprehensive debt framework -- starting with an across-the-board debt standstill for countries unable to service their debt, followed by targeted debt relief and a comprehensive approach to structural issues in the international debt architecture to prevent defaults.

It will also be essential for African countries to sustain their efforts to silence the guns and address violent extremism – and I welcome African support for my call for a global ceasefire. Political processes and elections in the coming months offer potential milestones for stability and peace.

Women will be central to every aspect of the response. Stimulus packages must prioritize putting cash in the hands of women and increasing social protection.

We must empower African youth. The human rights of all must be respected.

Many difficult decisions will need to be taken as the pandemic unfolds, and it will be essential to retain the trust and participation of citizens throughout.

These are still early days for the pandemic in Africa, and disruption could escalate quickly. Global solidarity with Africa is an imperative – now and for recovering better.

Ending the pandemic in Africa is essential for ending it across the world.

Thank you.

Video Link:

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/downloads2.unmultimedia.org/public/video/evergreen/MSG+SG+Covid+Africa+18+May/MSG+SG+IMPACT+OF+COVID19+ON+AFRICA+18+MAY+20.mp4>

UN Environment Programme

MEDIA ADVISORY

The UN Environment Programme, Asia and the Pacific Office in Bangkok is pleased to invite you to the Final Stakeholder Conference of the “Promotions of actions against marine plastic litter in India and Southeast Asia” (CounterMEASURE) project, to be held virtually on 25 – 28 May 2020.

The CounterMEASURE conference will address the emerging practice in reducing plastic pollution in river basin. The conference introduce latest science and technology as well as community engagement to stop plastic wastes leaking to our oceans. In the conference, experts introduce how drones and AI are used to tackle marine plastic pollution, how citizen science can help to identify plastic pollution, how the community activity helps to reduce the plastic leakage. Attendees can also access our finding in the form of reports, video clips, factsheets and a georeferenced data visualization platform during the Conference.

The Conference will be fully virtual and engage a wide group of project stakeholders, including policy-makers, researchers, engineers, businesses, civil society groups. The agenda of the Conference, with information on individual sessions, is attached for your reference. For more information and registration, please visit: <https://www.conference2020.countermeasure.asia/>

We would also appreciate if you could expand the network by sharing the conference to your expert network. If you could support us, please see the following link to see how you can support to expand the network. <https://www.conference2020.countermeasure.asia/>

We look forward to welcoming you to the Conference.

Registration: Please visit Conference website for the registration.

<https://www.conference2020.countermeasure.asia/>

The conference registration link is: <https://bit.ly/2TilniF>

Key dates: • Registration is open from 18th May. • The Conference runs from 25th May, 2020 through 28th.

For more information: CounterMEASURE Team, uneproap@un.org