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The first ever virtual African Regional Committee kicks off

Today, the Seventieth Session of the WHO African Regional Committee was successfully concluded with over 1,000 participants. The Session was unprecedented in many respects, not least because it was conducted in a virtual meeting in view with the ever-rising number of cases of the novel coronavirus disease, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the session, Madam Lydia Mizan, the Honourable Minister for Health of Ethiopia, who is the Chairperson of the Regional Committee, underscored the commitment of Member States of the Region in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic and commended the commitment of African Ministers of Health to the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Region. She said that the session provided the opportunity to usher RCM and the WHO Regional Director for Africa and beyond the full support to her country's health and participants in the Eight-Ballroom COVID-19.

In her remarks, President Mahamat Idriss Deby, the Honourable Minister for Health of Chad, underscored the importance of the session, which was the first ever meeting held in Africa to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, he reiterated the commitment and willingness of the country to host the next RC in Chad in 2021.

Madam Pamela Mbabi, the African Union Commissioner for Social Affairs highlighted the support which is being provided to African Member States by the Commission such as provision of vaccines, logistics, and other medical supplies, and the development of a continental strategy for vaccine development. She said that Africa has been focused to combat the COVID-19 pandemic in the region, and that the continental strategy to the COVID-19 vaccines for Africans as soon as the vaccines are available.

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The WHO-African Regional Director given her stewardship for 2019 to 2020 to Health Ministers of the region

The WHO-African Regional Director, Dr Matshidiso Moeti, was commended for her stewardship for the period 2019-2020 to the delegates attending the Seventieth Session of the World Health Organization Regional Committee (RC70) for Africa (WHO/AFRO).

The Regional Director's report, that she made the second term, highlighted her achievements and the challenges she faced during her tenure, including the Ebola outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Guinea, the pandemic, to a brief speech to Member States, the Regional Director commended the Member States for their support to the WHO Regional Office for Africa (AFRO) and said that "we have worked together to overcome crisis, isolate and treat people with COVID-19, and to keep and quarantine their contacts". She stated that "Ministers of Health have led the response to COVID-19 in your countries, and have kept your communities, your families and friends safe and thriving, between health systems and communities is fundamental to the response to the pandemic".

Concerning the ongoing response to the serious emergencies in the region including the COVID-19 pandemic, she said that WHO/AFRO has redeployed more than 600 staff members to the response of more than 10,000 health workers, such capacity to all pillars of emergency preparedness and response, including the deployment of epidemiologists, laboratory specialists, and clinicians to the front lines of the response. Details of the report, Dr Moeti elaborate have helped to protect an additional 1 million people from coronavirus disease in the region.

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RC70 holds a special session on COVID-19

COVID-19 is a global, regional and national threat to health security. It continues to devastate health systems, economies, institutions and sociocultural activities. These were sentiments of the Excellency Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, who was the keynote speaker at the opening session of the 70th session of the Regional Committee for Africa (RC70). The sentiments were echoed by other speakers including the WHO Director-General, who said that "the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa has been a remarkable success, and a testimony to the strong political will and leadership of Member States in a multisectoral and multidisciplinary preparedness plan. It is important to note that since the first case was reported in Africa on March 2, 2020, the national coordinating centres have maintained a multisectoral approach.

"The timely and effective implementation of our response strategy meets 3 possible 6 test suspected cases, 1 confirmed case, 1 recovered case, 1 death, 0 cases confirmed cases within 2 health facilities in 2 health care settings, and 0 cases nosocomial.

To support all this, the President of the Republic, who pioneer great leadership, has taken strong measures such as declaring a state of emergency, imposing a curfew, reshuffling the cabinet of ministers, and mobilizing the entire population to fight against the pandemic, and to save lives and livelihoods.

At the level of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, we ensured the strategic coordination of the response effort with the establishment of a National Committee for the Response and Epidemics (CNRE) and the operational coordination of the response through the Center for Emergency Health Operations (CEOS).

The ability of Senegal to contain the spread of COVID-19 the country will be based with the multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach which was the mobilization of all the actors of the country, in particular civil society, the private sector, NGOs, technical and financial partners.

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Interview with Minister Ambassador Ousuf Sarr

Minister of Health and Social Action of Senegal

Q. As of August 20, 2020, Senegal had 12,451 confirmed cases of COVID-19 including 273 deaths. Senegal is in 49th place among the countries in the WHO African Region with the highest number. How do you analyze this situation?

The number of cases reported by Senegal actively raises the predictions made before the start of the epidemic. Indeed, we had anticipated the peak of the epidemic in the month of August. The epidemic seems to a multisectoral and multidisciplinary preparedness plan. It is important to note that since the first case was reported in Africa on March 2, 2020, the national coordinating centres have maintained a multisectoral approach.

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Interview with H.E. Dr Lia Tadesse Gebremariam, Minister of Health, Ethiopia

Dr Tedros visits Ethiopia's Emerging Coronavirus Testing Laboratory

Q. How is COVID-19 spiking organized in Ethiopia?

H.E Dr Lia Tadesse, Minister of Health, Ethiopia:
Ethiopia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic is led by the Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI) under the laboratory plan which consists of five sections: laboratory logistics and expertise, COVID-19 test kits, laboratory governance and quality assurance, sample collection and laboratory biosafety management.

Ethiopia has never seen a virus in its testing capacity for COVID-19. While the order samples were sent to Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI) and the Ethiopian Science and Technology Agency (ESTA) had also formulated testing out of Ethiopia's COVID-19 test kits. Ethiopia's COVID-19 response worked with the national authorities to set up Real Time PCR molecular testing capacity to ensure the country's capacity to detect the virus. Ethiopia's response to the pandemic has been focused on testing, analysis and validation. The capacity of the beginning was 300 samples per day and the required period. Here has been a continuous effort to increase the capacity throughout the country.

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Interview with Dr Ibrahim Ndiaye

Coordinator of the Africa Regional Coordination for the Certification of Poliomyelitis Eradication

Q. The year 2020 marks the certification of interruption of indigenous wild poliovirus transmission in the African Region. Do you feel that you have achieved something of lasting value?

Let me take you back to when I jet started. In 1988, there were 200000 cases of polio annually in 125 countries. Today, we have zero cases in 2020.

It was in 1988 that the WHO-EAC the successful in eradicate the wild Polio virus from the world, and the Polio Eradication Initiative was launched. And then in the AFRO Region in 1989 the Organization of the African Unity (OAU) and the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Africa (AFRO) and UNICEF followed by Mission Member accounting the Ad Hoc Committee of Africa Campaign. The Ad Hoc Committee put in place by the Inter Regional Director, Dr Andrew Mellor Senior of Mission Member in 1989. The Head of Delivery Mission Member Dr Ibrahim Ndiaye, Senior Mission Member Dr Ibrahim Ndiaye, Senior Mission Member Dr Ibrahim Ndiaye, Senior