

# OPENING REMARKS ON COVID-19 IMPACT IN AFRICA

by

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COVID-19 reached Africa on February 14, 2020 when Egypt reported its first case. Then a second case in Algeria on February 25, 2020. The continent witnessed a moderate spread of COVID-19 contrary to what many initially feared because of the exponential spread experienced by other continents. Today, September 24th, 2020 Africa has about 1,465,193 confirmed cases and about 35,160 deaths in 52 nations. Of course, the situation is different from country to country. But the most affected countries are still South Africa, Egypt, Algeria, Ethiopia, and Morocco.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), although the number of COVID-19 cases and human victims are lower than in other continents, Africa is facing a health shock of COVID-19 surpassing its means of resistance due especially to its economic limited capacities in general and its already strained health systems. So, beyond health risks, COVID-19 has been a shock to African economies. This happened in three waves according to WHO: (i) lower trade and investment from China in the immediate term; (ii) a demand slump associated with the lockdowns in the European Union and OECD countries; and (iii) a continental supply shock affecting domestic and intra-African trade.

Fortunately, since 20 July, Africa has seen a steady decline in new COVID-19 cases. Indeed, in general, COVID-19 transmission in the region has been marked by relatively fewer infections, which have been on the decline over the past two months. Over the last month, 77 147 new cases were reported, down from 131 647 recorded in the previous four weeks owing to a variety of socio-ecological factors as well as early and strong public health measures taken by governments across the region

“The downward trend that we have seen in Africa over the past two months is undoubtedly a positive development and speaks to the robust and decisive public health measures taken by governments across the region,” said Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Director for

Africa. “But we must not become complacent. Other regions of the world have experienced similar trends only to find that as social and public health measures are relaxed, cases start ramping up again” she added.

This means that Africans still need to work hard to keep COVID-19 away from the continent. Each nation needs to commit to that end, especially to be on the alert to occasional flare-ups that appear in some parts of the continent.