

Restoring the conditions for SDG progress in African countries, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries

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Statement of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group for Sustainable Development Goals (IPMG)

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Africa is not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 of the African Union. Weak governance, corruption, environmental degradation, human rights violations, lack of economic diversity, and humanitarian and conflict situations, among others, further undermined progress.

With the COVID 19 pandemic, most African countries moved swiftly, enforcing quarantines, lockdowns, and border closures. So far, countries with higher levels of testing have experienced lower infection rates, but limited capacity has rendered it difficult to discern accurate transmission, hospitalization, and mortality rates. The Regional Economic bodies have also been proactive, unveiling initiatives within their respective regions. According to African CDC, only 1.1% of the Africans has had the covid19 vaccines as of 30 June 2021 and with this, the situation of indigenous people is yet to be known.

While the pandemic's full impact has yet to be felt, the prolonged lack of investment in critical health systems and decades of economic growth that also exacerbated grievances and inequality, increase Africa's vulnerability. If not controlled early, the pandemic could quickly morph into humanitarian, socioeconomic, development, and political crises, with profoundly destabilizing effects.

While the immediate health impact is still evolving, the indirect consequences beyond health already bring a heavy toll. These include food insecurity, lack of medical supplies, loss of income and livelihood, difficulties in applying sanitary and physical distancing measures, a looming debt crisis, as well as related political and security risks.

Below are some recommendations to mitigate the impacts of covid 19 in Africa in general and to indigenous peoples in particular:

- The global health response must emphasize solidarity towards developing countries and indigenous peoples in particular, guided by the notion of health as a global public good. African countries, with support from partners, can take measures to improve testing capacities, access to medical supplies for all and to indigenous peoples in remote areas. Participation in vaccine and treatment research is critical that Africa should benefit from equal access. These measures must be part of a comprehensive effort to improve the resilience and preparedness of healthcare systems including in remote areas that will be increasingly exposed to risks including from climate-induced natural disasters and conflicts.
- The inclusion and the full and effective participation of indigenous peoples, women and youth, and respect for human rights need to be upheld in the delivery of COVID-19-related services and in the fight against the virus. There should be no land grabbing and exploitation of indigenous peoples lands and territories in the name of economic

recovery that will only aggravate inequality and marginalization of those who protect and preserve biodiversity. Indigenous peoples in Africa comprise 16.3% of the global population of indigenous peoples; and 82.1% of indigenous peoples in Africa are in rural areas. Majority are not legally recognized as indigenous peoples with collective their rights. This remains a major obstacle in the inclusion and protection of the rights and wellbeing of indigenous peoples in Africa

- Maintaining peace and security in Africa remains paramount. Priorities in this regard include silencing the guns, implementing the Secretary-General's and the African Union Commission Chairperson's appeal for a ceasefire, sustaining peace processes and critical peace operations. The response to COVID-19 needs to be "conflict-sensitive" and avoid generating new tensions. Decisions regarding planned national elections should be taken in an inclusive and democratic manner. An inclusive security approach should also ensure that the spike in domestic violence and harmful practices, such as child marriage, and sexual abuse as a result of the pandemic, are fully addressed through preventive measures into all response planning and actions at all levels