

#TalkingAfricaEurope



High-Level Special Dialogue on Addressing the Vaccine Challenge for a renewed Africa-Europe partnership: Leading the way to the 6th AU-EU Summit



CONTEXT

The Africa-Europe Foundation has been co-founded in December 2020 by Friends of Europe and the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, in partnership with the African Climate Foundation and the ONE Campaign and with a multitude of stakeholders from civil society, business, policymaking and the youth sector across Africa and Europe. The purpose of the Africa-Europe Foundation is to facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue and catalyse diverse partnerships that can revitalise Africa-Europe relations for the benefit of their people.

The 6th AU-EU Summit scheduled for mid- February 2022 represents a significant milestone in which to break new ground towards our shared future.

Ahead of this Summit, to facilitate an open and frank dialogue on key, potentially contentious, issues between our two continents, AEF is organising three high-level “Talking Africa-Europe” specials focusing on the priority issues of Climate and Energy (January 20), Migration and Mobility (January 27) and the Vaccine Challenge (February 3).

PROGRAMME

More than one year after the launch of the global vaccination campaign, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to heavily impact health systems, economies and the day to day lives of citizens in both Africa and Europe.

This debate will touch on the immediate challenge of ensuring Africa’s population’s effective vaccination against COVID-19, and then on ways and means to develop local vaccine manufacturing capacity in Africa, in order to ensure long-term health security and autonomy.

Questions include:

- What are the latest update and prospects regarding COVID-19 cases and vaccination in Africa?
- Regarding the immediate challenge of COVID-19 vaccination in Africa, what are the current bottlenecks in both doses’ availability and distribution? How can Europe /Africa partnership best address them?
- Regarding the long-term challenge of building Africa’s vaccine manufacturing capacity, what needs to be addressed? How can Europe/Africa partnership best contribute to that challenge?

YouTube links

- [View the debate in English](#)
- [Regardez le débat en français](#)

DISCUSSANTS (in alphabetical order)

Abebe Aemro Selassie, Director African Department, International Monetary Fund

Aboubacar Kampo, Director of Health Programmes, UNICEF

Marie-Paule Kieny, Chair of the Medicines Patent Pool Foundation, Chair of the French Scientific Committee on COVID-19 vaccine

Jeffrey Lazarus, Associate Research Professor and Co-director of the Viral and Bacterial Infections Programme, Barcelona Institute for Global Health

Morena Makhoana, Chief Executive Officer, The Biovac Institute

Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa

Sierk Poetting, Chief Operating Officer BioNTech

Martin Seychell, Deputy Director-General, Directorate-General for International Partnership, European Commission

Mark Sprenger, Special Envoy of Global Health, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, Netherlands

Raji Tajudeen, Head of Africa CDC Public Health Institutes & Research Division

Jutta Urpilainen, European Commissioner for International Partnerships

Chrysoula Zacharopoulou, MEP, co-chair of the COVAX Shareholders Council and co-chair of the Strategy groups of the Africa-Europe Foundation

Solomon Zewdu, Deputy Director Africa Office, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

SUMMARY

03/02/2022 – Addressing the vaccine challenge for a renewed Africa-Europe partnership: Leading the way to the AU-EU summit

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During the third and final high-level debate on 3 February 2022 leading up to the [EU-Africa Summit on 17-18 February](#), participants discussed the current vaccine challenge in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

More than one year after the launch of the global vaccination campaign and just two weeks before the EU-African Union summit, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to heavily impact health systems, economies and the day to day lives of citizens in both Africa and Europe.

As of 26/1/2022, cumulative reported COVID-19 cases per 1 million population are nearly 25 times higher in the European Union (EU) than in Africa

However, the impact of COVID-19 in Africa may be greatly under-estimated: according to World Health Organization (WHO), about only one in seven COVID-19 infections are being detected in Africa. Only seven out of 54 African countries have reached the 2021 year-end WHO target of fully vaccinating 40% of their people, compared to 26 out of the 27 EU countries

In her opening statements, **Jutta Urpilainen**, European Commissioner for International Partnerships recalled the mantra that “When it comes to infectious diseases, none of us is safe until all of us are safe.” (09:24)

Summarising EU action in supporting the fight against COVID-19, she highlighted that “the EU has provided €46 billion to help 130 countries, 10 billion of which has gone to Africa.” (10:20)

However, she cautioned that “Equity demands more than donations,”(10:53) , noting that “around half the vaccines have so far reached Africa, and it remains key to ensure that they reach people’s arms”. (10:30)

She emphasised that as long as the general vaccination is still below 10% in Africa, “the whole international community has failed, because we haven’t done enough”. (40:09)

Looking forward, the Commissioner shared the EU’s goal to partner with Africa to support robust healthcare systems and pharmaceutical capabilities.

In the short term, the EU will “continue to support an urgent response to COVID-19 including the deployment of vaccines, with €100 million going towards supporting vaccine deployment in Africa.” (11:22)

For the longer term, the EU has already launched an initiative to support Africa’s local pharmaceutical goals with a particular attention to vaccines with the aim of boosting vaccine manufacturing on the continent to the tune of €1 billion with projects underway in Rwanda, Senegal, South-Africa and Ghana.

Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa, provided an update of the current situation on the ground in Africa, describing how 11 million Africans have been infected by COVID-19 and a quarter of a million have died, albeit with significant regional disparities.

Moreover, the impact of COVID-19 in Africa may be greatly under-estimated. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), only one in seven COVID-19 infections are being detected in Africa.

Moeti went on to state that in the early phases of the pandemic, access to services related to HIV, tuberculosis, and family planning, amongst others, declined.

“We need to learn how to invest in peacetime. Much of what is happening today is happening in the context of crisis,”(22:14) she said, expressing the hope that by the next crisis Africa would be in a better situation in terms of access and resilience, with more robust health systems.

Tajudeen Raji, Head of the Division of Public Health Institutes and Research, Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), said that collaborating with partners including the WHO has been key to Africa’s success story on vaccination.

“Even before the first vaccination was approved, we knew that Africa would be at the end of the queue and that it would trickle down after everyone has taken their share,” (25:58) he said.

Raji mentioned the recent African Union heads of state meeting that discussed a report covering such questions as how Africa can strengthen health situations on the continent, increase human resources, and build local manufacturing capacity for vaccines.

Abebe Aemro Selassie, Director African Department, International Monetary Fund, “the deep economic case for having very strong manufacturing capacity is just a no-brainer and has to be pursued.” ([01:35:53](#))

He advocated for capacity to be ramped up and called for “more open source sharing of technology, of knowhow, is going to be very important particularly in situations of pandemics and global emergencies.” ([01:38:05](#))

“Pandemics can bring economies to their knees,”([01:41:02](#)) he said, explaining that having resilience must be one of the big takeaways from this pandemic.

Mo Ibrahim, Founder and Chairman of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, intervened to say that in his view the refusal to take vaccines is “a global phenomenon – there is nothing African about hesitancy”. ([50:23](#))

He said “we were all disappointed also how Europe moved to protect its own pharmaceutical industry” ([52:12](#)) on the issue of intellectual property rights.

He also added that “We African also make mistakes and our health systems are weak. We spend 1.9% of GDP in our health systems, way below global coverage and our data collection is very weak.” ([54:26](#))

Jutta Urpilainen countered that it is the obligation of politicians to look after their citizens, but also defended the EU, saying it had “shown solidarity” to Africa and partner countries.

“There is lots of work ahead of us,”([14:24](#)) she said, “and only together can we find solutions that are longstanding for both of our continents.” ([14:40](#))

Ahead of the EU-AU Summit, the Africa Europe Foundation will be sharing the key outcomes of the three ‘Talking-Africa Europe’ Specials – Energy/Climate; Migrations/mobility; Vaccines which will feed into the dialogue among Heads of State from both continents.

[Synthesis report outlining facts and figures in relation to the vaccine challenge in Africa and Europe](#)