



African Heads of State and Health Experts Convene Virtually for the First International Conference on Public Health in Africa

Historic conference will address the latest in COVID-19 research and learnings as the world grapples with the emergence of Omicron

14 December 2021 | Addis Ababa – Today the African Union (AU) and the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) opened the first international [Conference on Public Health in Africa \(CPHIA 2021\)](#), with over 10,000 participants expected from 140 countries around the world. Over three days, 14-16 December 2021, the conference will feature presentations from African Heads of State and Government, dignitaries and leading health experts, who will discuss how to accelerate progress against COVID-19 and chart a new path forward for public health on the continent.

CPHIA 2021 comes at a critical time for Africa and the world. COVID-19 has strained health systems globally, and with dangerously limited access to vaccines across Africa, it has laid bare deep inequities in access to healthcare and scientific innovations. Less than 20 African countries met the global goal of vaccinating at least 10% of the adult population by 30 September 2021, while nearly 90% of high income-countries met this target. As of 3 December 2021, [only 7% of the African population has been fully vaccinated](#), as many countries face a surge in new infections and the emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 variant of concern Omicron.

“CPHIA 2021 is creating the foundation that will allow us to usher in a new era for science, partnership, and innovation on the continent,” said Prof. Senait Fisseha, CPHIA 2021 co-chair and Director of Global Programs at The Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation. “The hope is that this will become the preeminent annual health gathering in Africa – where policymakers, researchers, advocates, community organizations and more come together to learn, address challenges and chart a path forward together. There are major changes ahead for health on the continent, and this is just the beginning.”

“Africa has some of the most sophisticated research institutions and talented scientists in the world, who have been closely monitoring COVID-19 and rapidly sharing their knowledge,” said CPHIA 2021 Co-Chair and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Global Health Equity, Professor Agnes Binagwaho. “CPHIA 2021 will provide the platform to both highlight their incredible contributions and allow for strengthened collaboration across sectors so we can better respond to current and future health crises and achieve health equity.”

CPHIA 2021 is a virtual event and is free for all participants. It will feature [seven scientific plenaries](#) and eight parallel sessions, and more than 40 side events that focus on the main pillars of the African Union’s New Public Health Order to meet the aspirations of [Agenda 2063 – the Africa We Want](#):

- Expanded and strengthened African manufacturing of vaccine, diagnostics, and therapeutics;
- Strengthened public health institutions for people-centered care;
- Strengthened public health workforce;
- Respectful action-oriented partnerships; and
- Engagement with the private sector.

The programme will include presentations from South African health experts who have been leading research into the Omicron variant, including Prof. Tulio de Oliveira (Director, Centre for Epidemic Response and Innovation in South Africa); Prof. Penny Moore (Virologist, University of Witwatersrand); and Prof. Salim Abdool Karim (Director, Center for the AIDS Program of Research in South Africa).

As part of the conference, there will also be 90 oral and poster abstract presentations, featuring research on COVID-19 epidemiology in Africa, the effectiveness of public health measures on the continent and the latest in disease modelling. Presentations include:

- Long COVID in South Africa: Persistent symptoms in patients hospitalized with SARS-CoV-2 (session 1 abstract presentations, 5:30-7 pm EAT, 14 December)
- Establishing an Africa-wide rumour tracking system for COVID-19 (session 5 abstract presentations, 1-2:30 pm EAT, 16 December)
- A Data Visualization Approach to Mitigating the Impacts of the Global COVID-19 Pandemic (session 6 abstract presentations, 1-2:30 pm EAT, 16 December)

Additionally, CPHIA 2021 has 39 official [side events](#) running from 13-17 December 2021. These include a Joint Convening to Accelerate Global COVID-19 Vaccinations with over 50 global technical leaders to highlight vaccination bottlenecks and prioritize progress toward 40% vaccination targets at country-level. A special session on day two will also spotlight recent advances in the development of oral drugs for COVID-19, and highlight the most recent data on these medicines, as well as address financing, access models, testing and delivery issues.

Regional leaders who will attend CPHIA 2021 include H.E. President Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Chairperson of the African Union; H.E. President Cyril Ramaphosa of the Republic of South Africa; H.E. President Paul Kagame of Rwanda; and Chairperson of the African Union Commission H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat. Other speakers include Dr Matshidiso Moeti, Regional Director, World Health Organisation Regional Office for Africa; Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization; Dr. Vera Songwe, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; Mme. Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of UNAIDS; Dr. John Nkengasong, Director of the Africa CDC; and CPHIA 2021 Co-Chairs Prof. Binagwaho and Prof. Fisseha.

“While African leadership in addressing COVID-19 has been extraordinary, the pandemic has also underscored what we’ve long known to be true: we must urgently reimagine the approach to public health in Africa,” said Dr. Nkengasong, Director of the Africa CDC. “The first international Conference on Public Health in Africa will be groundbreaking. By bringing together the brightest minds on the continent to share new insights and lessons learned, we will capitalize on this unprecedented momentum and create a New Public Health Order for Africa. We cannot wait any longer.”

CPHIA 2021 was organized by a committee of more than [70 leading health experts](#). For additional information about the conference or to register, please visit www.cphia2021.com.

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About Africa CDC

Africa CDC is a specialized technical institution of the African Union which supports Member States in their efforts to strengthen health systems and improve surveillance, emergency response, prevention and control of diseases. Learn more at: <http://www.africacdc.org>

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