

Addis Ababa, 13 August 2024

**Speech of the Director General / Africa CDC on the Declaration of Mpox as a Public Health
Emergency of Continental Security (PHECS)**

Excellencies, colleagues, members of the media, and my fellow African citizens,

Today, I stand before you with a heavy heart but also with an unwavering resolve. We are meeting today because of the emergence and rapid spread of Mpox. This is not just another challenge; it is a crisis that demands our collective action, a moment that calls upon the very essence of our humanity, our unity, and our strength.

Our continent has seen many struggles. We have faced pandemics, various outbreaks, natural disasters, and conflicts. Yet, through every adversity, we have risen, not as fragmented nations, but as one Africa—resilient, resourceful, and resolute. Today, as we confront the threat of Mpox, we must summon that same spirit of solidarity.

But let me be clear: this is not just an African issue. Mpox is a global threat, a menace that knows no boundaries, no race, no creed. It is a virus that exploits our vulnerabilities, preying on our weakest points. And it is in these moments of vulnerability that we must find our greatest strength and demonstrate that we all learned from CoVID by applying solidarity.

Excellencies, colleagues and my fellow African citizens,

Article 3 paragraph e of the Africa CDC Statutes approved by our African leaders in July 2022 is stating: ***Africa CDC declares PHECS in close consultation with affected Member States and, as appropriate, relevant stakeholders.***

Africa CDC is the autonomous public health Agency of Africa, and we bring together the scientific, strategic and political aspects to our work. In Africa CDC, we are led by science and evidence for everything we are doing and decisions we are making.

Therefore, we started consultations with several bodies in Africa and the World .

At scientific and technical level, we had meetings with various bodies and people who are working pro bono and tirelessly for our continent and the only way for me to thank them is to recognize them here:

- **Emergency Consultative Group Meeting**
 1. Prof Slim Abdoul Karim
 2. Prof Helen Rees

3. Dr David Parirenyatwa
4. Prof Lucille Blumberg
5. Prof Jean Jacques Muyembe
6. Prof Francine Ntoumi
7. Prof Rose Leke Fonbang
8. Prof Jean Nachega
9. Dr Amadou Sall
10. Prof Tomori Oyewale
11. Prof Samba Sow
12. Prof Dimie Ogoina
13. Prof Abderahmane Maroufi
14. Prof Maha El Rabbat
15. Prof Samia Menif Marrakchi
16. Prof Fawzi Derrar
17. Dr Sultani Matendechero
18. Prof Nelson Sewakambo
19. Prof Claude Mambo Muvunyi
20. Prof Agnes Binagwaho

Supported by international senior experts like David Heymann, Francis Collins, Peter Piot, Dr Sangwoo Tak, ECDC, Mario Santos Moreira and Jeremy Farrah

PPPR commission that is advising our Champion President Ramaphosa on the best way Africa can deal with various outbreaks. Maha El Rabbat,

1. Ama Fenny,
2. Senait Fisseha,
3. Githinji Gitahi,
4. Denis Mukwege,
5. Abderrahmane Maaroufi,
6. Sani Aliyu,
7. Agnes Binagwaho ,
8. Francine Ntoumi,
9. Amadou Sall, Salim Abdool Karim

Advisory and Technical Council of Africa CDC.

1. Dr Eduardo Sado Gudo (CHAIR), Dr Alex Okoh (VICE CHAIR)
2. Dr Anne Marie Ambourhouet-Bigmann
3. Dr Patrick Amoth, Prof Roma Chilengi
4. Pr NYANDWI Joseph
5. Dr Dionis NIZIGIYIMANA "
6. Prof. Claude Mambo MUVUNYI
7. Mrs Dr Quinta Insumbo
8. Dr Abdulmenem Alkmashe

9. Dr Jean AKIANA
10. Dr. Mohannad Al-Nsour,
11. Dr Khadidja GUIRSIMI YOUSOUF
12. Rose Mwebaza
13. Dr Adamu Isah
14. Dr James Wabacha
15. Dr Karim Tounkara
16. Prof Francis Kasolo
17. Dr. Thomas Mollet
18. Prof Abderrahmane Maaroufi

Other bodies consultant at technical level are:

- **National Public health Institutes of all affected MS.**
- **Private sector including Manufacturers of vaccines and diagnostics**
- **Youth movements and organizations**

At strategic level, we had meetings with:

- Joint Emergency Action Plan (JEAP) principals meeting: WHO AFRO, WHO EMRO, WHO HQ, UNICEF ESARO, UNICEF WCARO, UNICEF HQ and Africa CDC
- African Union Joint Sitting Committee comprised by Member States Ambassadors based in Addis-Ababa on behalf of the PRC: we got USD 10.4 Million
- Governing Board of Africa CDC
- Various partners including WHO DG, UNICEF DED, Gavi, GFATM, CEPI, MasterCard Foundation, Wellcome Trust, BMGF, World Bank, AfreximBank, Africa Re, African Development Bank, ...

At political level, we had meetings with

- Ministers of affected countries and countries at risk
- Chairperson of African Union Commission, H.E. Moussa Faki
- President of Mauritania and President of African Union, H.E. Mohammed Ould Ghazouani

For all of these consultations, at least 600 people were reached in various capacities to discuss data and evidence, and provide the way to move forward for this outbreak.

As demonstrated by Professor Salim, Mpox has now crossed borders, affecting thousands across our continent. Families have been torn apart, and the pain and suffering have touched every corner of our continent.

Based on the consensus or even unanimity reached from various bodies and consultations, as prescribed by Article 3 paragraph e of the Africa CDC statute, today Tuesday 13 August 2024, I declare with a heavy heart but with an unyielding commitment to our people, Mpox as a PHECS in Africa.

Excellencies, colleagues and my fellow African citizens,

This declaration is not merely a formality; it is a clarion call to action. It is a recognition that we can no longer afford to be reactive. We must be proactive and aggressive in our efforts to contain and eliminate this threat.

This declaration aims to enhance the global response, mitigate the impact of the health threat, and protect public health while minimizing disruptions to travel and trade.

Please let me be clear and loud: there will be no interruption of movements of people and goods.

Article 3 paragraph f of the Africa CDC Statutes is giving Africa CDC the mandate to lead and coordinate the response when there is declaration of PHEIC or PHECS. Please let me read this paragraph f:

“Coordinate and supports Member States in health emergencies response particularly those which have been declared PHECS or PHEIC emergencies as well as health promotion and diseases prevention through health systems strengthening, by addressing communicable and non-communicable diseases, environmental health and Neglected Tropical Diseases; “

During the consultation process, Africans clearly and friends of Africa share with us the way they were proud to see a strong and capable African body taking the lead for this outbreak and protect African population. We were also clearly requested to work together and coordinate support from other key partners like WHO, UNICEF, bi and multilateral cooperation, private sector, philanthropies, and academia.

We declare today this PHECS to mobilize our institutions, our collective will, and our resources to act—swiftly and decisively. It empowers us to forge new partnerships, to strengthen our health systems, to educate our communities, and to deliver life-saving interventions where they are needed most.

But declarations alone will not suffice. Words must be matched with deeds.

And today, I commit to you that Africa CDC will lead this fight with every resource at our disposal. Together with our partners, we will deploy experts, bolster our laboratories, and enhance in-country and cross-border surveillance systems. We will work with governments, international partners, and local communities to ensure that every African, from the bustling cities to the remotest villages, is protected.

We will also prioritize the equitable distribution of vaccines, treatments, and protective measures. No one should be left behind—regardless of their socioeconomic status, their location, or their circumstances. This is a fight for all Africans, and we will fight it together.

A Call for Solidarity and Action

To our Member States, we call upon our leaders to give us the opportunity to better support people who are affected.

From the bottom of our heart, we thank H.E. Joao Lourenco, President of Angola, for his negotiation of ceasefire in the eastern part of DRC where the outbreak is circulating between DRC, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda.

We thank H.E. Felix Tshisekedi, President of DRC, and H.E. Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda, for accepting this ceasefire and we remain available under their leadership to work with other partners to bring needed support to this region.

To our global partners, we call upon you to stand with us in this critical hour. Africa has long been a frontline in the battle against infectious diseases, and we have often borne this burden with limited resources. But the fight against Mpox requires a global response. We need your support, your expertise, and your solidarity. The world cannot afford to turn a blind eye to this crisis. From May 2022 to July 2023, Mpox was declared PHEIC, but Africa didn't get appropriate support and when cases stopped in other parts of the World, there was a silence on increase of cases in Africa. We call upon our international partners to take this Mpox opportunity to act differently and work closely with Africa CDC to provide appropriate support to our Member States

To my fellow Africans, I say this: the road ahead will be difficult for all of us, but we are not strangers to hardship. ...We have faced the scourge of Ebola, the devastation of HIV/AIDS, and the threat of COVID-19. In each of these battles, we have emerged stronger, more unified, and more determined. Mpox will be no different.

In the next 2 weeks, joint response plan will be available coming from country plans to be reviewed by ECG.

Today, I have signed a tripartite agreement Africa CDC – EU/ Health Emergency Preparedness and Response and Bavarian Nordic for the procurement and rapid distribution of 200,000 doses of vaccines in Africa.

I call upon Member States to fast-track the emergency authorization of M-Pox vaccines. This will play a critical role in safeguarding public health and ensuring rapid access to life-saving interventions. By fast-tracking vaccine approvals, while maintaining strict safety protocols, regulatory bodies can play a crucial role in addressing urgent health needs and mitigating the effects of health emergencies.

This can significantly shorten the timeline for vaccine deployment, enabling healthcare systems to respond more effectively to emerging threats. In doing so, Member States also contribute to

a coordinated continental response, ensuring that vaccines reach those who need them most, and ultimately, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Excellencies, my fellow African citizens, we must act now, with urgency and purpose. Protect yourselves and your loved ones. Follow the guidance of health authorities. Support one another, especially the most vulnerable among us. Together, we can turn the tide of this crisis.

In the face of adversity, Africa has always found its strength in unity. Today, we must draw upon that strength once more. We must stand together—governments, institutions, communities, and individuals—as one continent, one people, united in our resolve to overcome this threat.

Mpox may have taken us by surprise, but it will not defeat us. Together, we will rise above this challenge. Together, we will protect our people, our future, and our continent.

Let history remember this day not as the day we were overcome by fear, but as the day we chose to fight back with courage, with compassion, and with an unbreakable spirit. Africa, the fight begins now. And together, we will prevail.

Thank you.