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## Africa CDC Deploys Experts on Investigation Mission for Disease outbreak in Democratic Republic of Congo

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 9 December**

From 5 to 7 December, the Director General of Africa CDC, H.E. Dr. Jean Kaseya, travelled to the DRC to engage with national authorities, assess the situation on the ground, and extend Africa CDC's support in the investigation of an unknown "disease X." The disease presents symptoms such as fever, headache, and a high mortality rate among children. This visit reaffirms Africa CDC's commitment to supporting the country in its investigation and response efforts. The outbreak, first identified in late October and reported to national authorities in early December, underscores the need to strengthen surveillance and laboratory capabilities in the region.

The epicenter of the outbreak, Panzi Health Zone, is located approximately 700 km southwest of Kinshasa. With a population of around 200,000 spread across 7,377 km<sup>2</sup>, the district's limited laboratory capacity required samples to be transported to the national reference laboratory in Kinshasa, highlighting the urgent need for decentralized laboratory infrastructure.

Africa CDC is working closely with the DRC Ministry of Health (MoH), the National Institute of Biomedical Research (INRB), the National Public Health Institute (NPHI), and other partners to strengthen disease monitoring through genomic surveillance. This collaboration focuses on creating a sustainable national pathogen genomics strategy and decentralizing laboratory capacity to improve outbreak response and preparedness.

Africa CDC continues to strengthen molecular detection and sequencing capacity in the DRC by providing advanced tools, including, molecular diagnostic and sequencing equipment, a computer server for bioinformatic analysis, testing reagents, an automated liquid handler, and essential supplies. These cutting-edge resources have significantly improved the INRB's ability to quickly identify outbreak-

causing pathogens and support broader molecular testing and genomic sequencing across the country.

Africa CDC has also deployed a multidisciplinary team to support the MoH's ongoing investigation. The team, which includes epidemiologists, laboratory scientists, infection prevention and control experts, and other specialists, is working in collaboration with national and international partners, including the WHO, to assess the situation, accelerate diagnostic testing, and implement control measures.

Disease X refers to an unknown pathogen with the potential to cause severe illness and widespread public health impacts. Early detection, investigation, and coordinated responses are critical to mitigating its potential effects.

"Africa CDC is fully committed to supporting Member States in safeguarding public health," said H.E. Dr. Jean Kaseya, Director General of Africa CDC. "Our role in this mission is to collaborate with the DRC Ministry of Health and partners, ensuring evidence-based responses that strengthen health security in Africa. Together, we can identify and address this emerging threat while laying the groundwork for sustainable solutions."

Africa CDC will continue to provide updates on the progress of the investigation and response, maintaining transparency and close collaboration with the DRC government and other stakeholders throughout this critical mission.

### **About Africa CDC**

*The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) is a continental autonomous public health agency of the African Union that supports member states in efforts to strengthen health systems and improve surveillance, emergency response, and prevention and control of diseases.*

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