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Date: January 31, 2025

To the attention of African Heads of State and Government

Through

H.E. Mohamed Ould Ghazouani

President of Mauritania

Chair of African Union

Chair of Africa CDC Committee of Heads of State and Government

Through

H.E. Moussa Faki

AUC chairperson

Subject: Africa CDC Urges Immediate Action to Protect Lives Amid Escalating Health and Security Crises

Your Excellencies,

Africa is facing an unprecedented convergence of crises that threaten to reverse decades of progress in health security and economic development. The number of health emergencies on the continent surged from 153 outbreaks in 2022-2023 to 242 in 2024, significantly increasing the risk of another pandemic emerging from Africa. At the same time, shifting global priorities have led many traditional partners to reduce development assistance, including the recent announcement of a 90-day pause in U.S. foreign aid.

The consequences of inaction are severe. Africa CDC projections indicate that without urgent intervention, financial constraints could reverse our hard-won health gains, leading to an estimated 2 to 4 million additional deaths per year from preventable and treatable diseases. This human toll translates into massive economic losses, pushing an estimated 39 million more people into poverty and costing the continent billions annually. This is not just an African crisis—it is a global crisis in the making.

Africa CDC has taken swift action to mitigate the impact of these developments. Upon learning of the U.S. funding pause, we immediately engaged the new administration. I took this message to global platforms, including my interview to CNN on 28 January 2025, advocating for a waiver for life-saving humanitarian assistance. As a result, a waiver was granted to ensure critical interventions continue including HIV medications. However, this is only one battle. It is a wake-up call for Africa to take charge of its own health security by accelerating innovative financing mechanisms and increasing domestic investment in public health.

While Africa is making efforts to protect its people, peace remains the missing element. Nowhere is this more evident than in Goma, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

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(DRC). This is not only a security issue—it is a full-scale public health emergency. Goma, a city of three million people, including one million displaced individuals, has one of the highest population densities in the world—39,620 people per square kilometer—without adequate health infrastructure or access to basic services such as water, sanitation, and hygiene. These extreme conditions, combined with insecurity and mass displacement, have fueled the mutation of the Mpox virus, generating the deadly Clade 1b variant in 2023. Goma has become the epicenter, spreading Mpox across 21 African countries, including SADC and EAC states. This strain has already claimed thousands of lives, particularly among children and young people, and has proven to be highly sexually transmissible.

These same conditions have also led to widespread measles, cholera and other outbreaks, claiming thousands more lives. Africa CDC has worked tirelessly to secure Mpox vaccines and other essential health commodities for Goma and eastern DRC. However, without peace and security, these supplies cannot reach the children and mothers who need them most.

I am prepared to personally fly to Goma and oversee the delivery of these life-saving interventions—but security is essential.

Your Excellencies, this war must end. If decisive action is not taken, it will not be bullets alone that claim lives—it will be the unchecked spread of major outbreaks and potential pandemics that will come from this fragile region (please let us not forget the lessons from CoVID), devastating economies and societies across our continent. Our collective survival depends on urgent action from Your Excellencies' decisions.

Your leadership is critical in this moment. Africa's future and survival depend on your ability to act swiftly, decisively, and together. Africa CDC remains committed to working with Your Excellencies to protect lives, strengthen our health systems, and ensure a safer, healthier continent for future generations.

Yours sincerely,

H.E. Dr. Jean Kaseya
Director-General, Africa CDC

