



**SPEAKING NOTES FOR PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA FOR THE
1ST EXTRAORDINARY INTER-SESSIONAL SUMMIT OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT OF THE
ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN AND PACIFIC STATES (OACPS), 3 JUNE 2020**

Your Excellency, President Uhuru Kenyatta,
Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,
Secretary-General of the OACPS, His Excellency Mr Georges Rebelo Pinto Chikoti,
Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus,
Colleagues and Friends,

I wish to express my appreciation to President Kenyatta for convening this important Summit on an issue that deeply affects each and every one of us.

The coronavirus pandemic has clearly demonstrated that the nations of the world are profoundly interconnected and interdependent.

As an organisation that brings together countries from different parts of the globe, the OACPS has an important role in promoting cooperation and solidarity.

As the countries of Africa, we have acted decisively and in unison to respond to the threat of COVID-19.

Although the number of infections in Africa is currently lower than elsewhere in the world, there is an expectation that the worst is still to come, with dire social and economic consequences.

The outbreak of the virus has caused a great deal of damage to economies on the continent and is beginning to stretch public health systems.

We have urgent needs as a continent with regard to medical supplies, testing equipment and facilities, laboratories, personal protection equipment and ventilators.

At the same time, our experience in managing public health emergencies has served us well, and enabled the rapid deployment of trained and experienced community health workers to do screening and testing.

The African Union has developed a strategy to address the challenge of COVID 19.

Through the five regional coronavirus task forces we have established in all the 5 regions of the continent, we are working across national borders to oversee screening, detection and diagnosis; infection control and clinical management of infected persons; and to drive mass communication and community engagement.

As part of our strategy we have established an African COVID-19 Response Fund as a key intervention to mobilise and direct resources towards the continent's response to the challenge.

COVID 19 is a global pandemic and requires cooperation and solidarity amongst the nations and the peoples of the world. The AU has been in the forefront of mobilising international support for both a health response to the pandemic and a comprehensive economic stimulus package for Africa.

As part of the economic stimulus we have called for debt relief for countries that are indebted.

We call on the OACPS to support the AU's call for a two-year debt standstill and a plan for the restructuring of both private and bilateral debt.

We further support the appeal to the International Monetary Fund for special drawing rights allocations to provide additional liquidity to countries in need.

The World Health Organization has been instrumental in supporting national efforts to combat COVID-19. As African countries, we continue to reiterate our full support for the WHO and its Director-General, Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus.

We fully support the initiative by the WHO together with many governments, non-profit organisations and industry leaders to speed up the development and production of vaccines and therapeutics, and to ensure that they are distributed speedily and equitably across the globe.

We believe that no country must be left behind. In this regard, we call for economic sanctions against Sudan and Zimbabwe to be lifted to provide the necessary space for these countries to devote their resources to the fight against COVID-19.

This is a global public health emergency and it needs a global response. We therefore need to promote multilateralism as the most effective instrument to ensure that all countries, big and small, rich and poor, are accommodated and their voices heard.

Through a decisive, effective and collective response to this global crisis, we will not only be safeguarding the lives, health and well-being of our people, but we will also be proving the relevance and value of bodies like the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States.

Global solidarity demands that we also stand as one against all forms of racism and intolerance.

Through the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Mr Moussa Faki Mahamat, the African Union has strongly condemned the murder of George Floyd in the United States of America and shares the anger of millions in the United States and across the world.

As countries that have borne the brunt of racial discrimination over centuries, we need to work together to end the scourge of racial violence, wherever it occurs. By working together, we can build a peaceful, just, healthy and prosperous global community.

I thank you.

ISSUED BY THE PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA AND CHAIRPERSON OF THE AFRICAN UNION