


Saving lives and money through the Africa Medical Supplies Platform

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Addis Ababa, 17 September 2020 - The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) on September 17, jointly held a high-level webinar for Ministers of Finance and Ministers of Health to showcase the Africa Medical Supplies Platform (AMSP).

AMSP is a digital platform intended to serve as a consolidated online marketplace to facilitate the provision of COVID-19-related medical products by addressing supply chain issues such as shortages, delays in distributing supplies, accessibility, quality standards and affordability.

The platform is a timely intervention, catalyzed by the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, set up to specifically respond to the pandemic that so far has claimed about seven thousand lives on the continent while infecting 1.3 million others. On the platform, countries can access quality, affordable PPEs, Test Kits, medicines and other related commodities.

This meeting is the third in a series, preceded by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) webinars held on August 14 and September 04 2020 respectively. The main objective of these webinars has been to sensitize, advocate and showcase the opportunities offered by AMSP, including in terms of creating fiscal space, growing local manufacturing, and reaping the early fruits of the AfCFTA.

AMSP aims at operationalizing and fostering the primary objectives of the AfCFTA-anchored Pharmaceutical Initiative of ensuring access to safe and affordable quality medicines in Africa, through pooled procurement and capacitating local production for improved health outcomes.

In her opening remarks COMESA Secretary General, Her Excellency Chileshe Kapwepwe acknowledged the value of AMSP especially as it complements their own efforts such as establishing COVID-19 guidelines to move supplies across the continent, ensuring uninterrupted supply of life-saving PPEs, Test kits, and medicines.

The AMSP website is currently live and is showing good results only weeks after it was launched. Fatoumata Ba, of Janngo Capital operating the platform and representative of Africa Union Special Envoy, Strive Masiyiwa, reports that there is keen interest by suppliers and manufacturers in Africa and across the globe to provide their products on the platform. She said the platform has already built up stocks of critical medical equipment above initial quantity estimates and below target sourcing prices from world class manufacturers.

ECA's Executive Secretary, Vera Songwe, pointed out that AMSP is "already saving lives and money on the continent." She urged ministers in charge of health and finance to "ramp up COVID-19 testing through procuring antigen test kits available on the platform," especially as countries strive to reopen their economies.

Africa CDC director John Nkengasong re-affirmed the need to approach COVID-19 holistically as the high number of deaths has been worsened by existing endemic diseases such as HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. He further impressed the need to step up the testing. By rolling antigen tests, Africa CDC has committed to 20 million tests by end of October 2020.

"This platform truly offers an opportunity to continue to engage in a spirited fight using commodities (that exist on the platform) to tackle COVID-19" said Mr. Nkengasong.

Many countries have already joined the platform and so have several reputable African suppliers and manufacturers. Ba, presenting on behalf of Masiyiwa, spoke to a key component of the online platform which is ensuring adequate quantity and quality of products. To that end, the initiative onboards manufactures with certifications from stringent global institutions such as the United States of America Food and Drug Administration, the British National Health Service NHS, Canada Health, African Medicine Agency and the World Health Organization for quality assurance.