



# Critical Issues for AU-EU Collaboration on Health and Science

17 February 2022

## 1. Content Flow of the Webinar

A letter signed by Pan African Parliament Acting President Hon Fortuna Charumbira was sent to WHO DG Tedros and EU External Chief Borrell, to ask for greater collaboration on the COVID-Pandemic in Africa. The letter was sent on 29 November 2021.

The letter is printed here:

<https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/current/news/more-news/scientists-and-politicians-ask-who-and-eu-support-vaccinations-africa-initiative-tilburg-scientists>

<https://www.vodan-totafrika.info/vodan-news-page.php?i=44&a=who-responds-to-vodan-africa-scientists-and-researchers-on-vaccine-inequality-and-needs-of-low-income-countries>

Dr Tedros replied to the signatories on 17 January 2022

<https://www.tilburguniversity.edu/current/news/more-news/who-answer-scientists-letter-lack-vaccines-africa-vaccine-nationalim-threat>

The exchange of letters came on the back of initiatives to demand attention for the global impact of COVID-19 and the need for collaboration with Africa. See for instance:

<https://www.advisorycouncilinternationalaffairs.nl/documents/publications/2020/05/11/the-netherlands-and-the-global-approach-to-covid-19>

There has been serious concern over the lack of interoperable and machine actionable health data from Africa, to be available for better delivery of health care at point of care, to show challenges from Africa and to provide quality data that input in pipelines for AI-driven health care solutions, the next generation of health care provision that is extremely relevant for the geographically large continent that Africa is. The conference will hear from the initiative of the Virus Outbreak Data Network (VODAN)-Africa: <https://www.vodan-totafrika.info/> VODAN Africa built on the experience of the use of digital data in the Pandemic in Liberia, working with universities and health systems in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Liberia and Tunisia, together with the Leiden University Medical Centre (LUMC).



Also see this short video here on the importance of health data produced within and together with African stakeholders, under the key requirements of data as Findable, Accessible (under strict conditions), Interoperable and Reusable: FAIR, and GDPR, recognizing the possibilities of data curation as Localised Data restored locally, Data Sovereignty and Data Ownership and a need for clear definition of purpose and responsibilities of digital health data: <https://youtu.be/xRYyMX-j3ck>

Other challenges pertain to issues of inequality to access to health care, vaccines, education and employment. Vulnerable populations in Africa have suffered greatly from the pandemic and in many places education has been suspended for long periods of time. Speakers will speak to the challenges for vulnerable groups such as refugees and migrants on the Mediterranean route from Africa to Europe, but also vulnerable populations living in informal settlements or in zones threatened by war and conflict. The conference will hear from several experiences in this regard and how universities have played essential roles in social transformation of vulnerable populations.

New opportunities have also emerged as a result of the pandemic, driven by technological change and leadership in Africa to make this technology its own. The Digital Innovation and Skills Hub (DISH) established by KIU, East Africa University, Admas University, Addis Ababa University, Mekelle University, Aksum University Eastern College, Tangaza University, Universities in Sudan and South Sudan, the Sudan Organization of Research and Development (SORO), CEPO and AAHI, serves as an collaboration that is reaching vulnerable students to enhance their skills in new areas of education, including digitalization, health and heritage education: <https://codeesa.kiu.ac.ug/dish.php#:~:text=DISH%20is%20an%20e%20learning,are%20created%20and%20made%20available.>

The need for a concerted effort has become clear in the past months. Critical questions arise why vaccine production was not earlier realized, as this would benefit and protect the African continent, protect against Variants of Concern worldwide, create opportunities for science and employment. A critical article on this is available here:

Pharma blocked the WHO initiative to produce vaccines in Africa: Covid-19: WHO efforts to bring vaccine manufacturing to Africa are undermined by the drug industry, documents show BMJ 2022; 376 doi: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.o304> (Published 09 February 2022) Cite this as: BMJ 2022;376:o304

There are also great challenges ahead at a global scale and the AU-EU collaboration can play a key-role in driving positive change. Everyone can and needs to play a role in this and attaining the Millennium Development Goals will require government and public sector, private sector, civil society and academia to work together to prepare us for the future. Education and Science are key in this era which will be driven by digital innovation. The AU-EU collaboration could be a driver of sustainable leadership.

Africa comes into this partnership with its own roots, its history, its knowledge and its notion of ubuntu, that I exist because you do. These are not only healthy ingredients for a good partnership, these form an indispensable foundation for it. Europe has much to gain from acknowledging the richness of the African continent and embrace its heritage and culture.

## **2. Detailed programme**

### **Opening**

12:00 – 12:20

Challenges and Opportunities for AU-EU Collaboration

Opening Address by Hon. Chief Fortune Charumbira, Acting President of the Pan African Parliament

12:20 - 12:40

Addressing the Pandemic in Africa

Key-Note Address, WHO

12:40 – 13:00

Key issues for AU-EU Collaboration on Health and Science

Dr. Lieve Fransen

### **Addressing Key Issues for Africa-Europe Collaboration in Health and Science**

13:00-13:15

The Power of Reverse Linkages in entering the digital era of education and health

Prof. Dr. Mouhamed Mpezamihigo, KIU, Uganda

13:15-13:30

The Virus Outbreak Data Network: a Collaboration between African and Europe for FAIR and GDPR-led ethical health data and AI solutions

Prof. Dr. Francisca Oladipo, University of Lokoja, Nigeria

13:30-13:45

Role of academia in Inter-religious dialogue for peace-building and social transformation

Dr. Reginald Nalugalan Tangaza University College, Kenya

13:45 – 14:00

Sustainable Leadership for Global responsibility to achieve the Millennium Development Goals

Prof. Ronald de Jong, Tilburg University

### **Discussion**

14:00 – 14:05

Social Inequality and challenges in health care provision in Nairobi Metropolitan

Dr. Asma Awadh, Nairobi Metropolitan

14:05 – 14:10

Challenges of providing health care for the needy during war

Dr Hagos Godifay, Bureau of Health, Regional State of Tigray, Ethiopia

14:10-14:15

Democracy as prerequisite for education and a healthy society

Ahmed Elzobier, Civil Society Forum of the Horn of Africa

14:15 – 14:20

Problems of Migrants and Refugees in Libya, Tunisia and Niger

Dr. Meriem Ghardallou, Université de Sousse, Tunisia

14:20 – 14:30

Addressing the needs of women as leaders in communities

Hon. Julia Duncan-Cassell, Liberia

### **Close**

14:30-14:40

African Heritage and Identity as a Key Ingredient for Healthy Africa-European relations

Prof. Dr. Munyaradzi Mawere, Great Zimbabwe University

14:40-14:50

Conclusions of the Conference on the AU-EU Partnership as we move forward from the Pandemic

Prof. Dr. Mirjam van Reisen, Leiden University & Tilburg University

14:50

Closing

Prof. Dr. Mouhamed Mpezamihigo

Hon. Chief Fortune Charumbira