



# 2021 Ibrahim Governance Weekend

COVID-19 in Africa  
one year on: Impact  
and Prospects

Summary of  
the discussions



# 2021 Ibrahim Governance Weekend

## *COVID-19 in Africa one year on: Impact and Prospects*

### **Thursday 27 May**

Now Generation Forum

### **Thursday 3 June**

Ibrahim Forum session one:

*Health – Lessons from the pandemic: an urgent call  
to strengthen African health capacities*

Ibrahim Leadership Ceremony

### **Friday 4 June**

Ibrahim Forum session two:

*Politics and Society – Managing the fallout: setbacks  
in democracy and rights, and new triggers of instability*

Mo Ibrahim in conversation with Charles Michel,  
President, European Council

### **Saturday 5 June**

Ibrahim Forum session three:

*Economy – Looking ahead: a key opportunity to reinvent  
Africa's growth model*

Mo Ibrahim in conversation with H.E. Mahamadou Issoufou,  
former President of Niger and 2020 Ibrahim Laureate





# Introduction

With much of the continent currently battling with a third wave of COVID-19 cases, it is still too early to count the full impact of the pandemic in Africa. But eighteen months on from the first reported case of the virus, the burden it has imposed on Africa's economies and societies has already been profound.

With the COVID-induced economic shock forcing the continent into its first recession in 30 years, the pandemic has laid bare stark structural weaknesses in Africa's health systems and growth model. At the same time, this unprecedented shock has uncovered avenues for the continent to define a new growth model that is more equitable, sustainable and self-reliant.

From 3 to 5 June, the 2021 Ibrahim Governance Weekend (IGW) virtually assembled leading voices from across Africa and beyond to discuss the impact of the pandemic on the continent and the path to recovery. The unifying thread that emerged across the three days was the need for sound governance, transparency and accountability to remain at the heart of Africa's recovery, with the aim of building a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient future for generations to come.

The first session of the Ibrahim Forum, held on 3 June, focused on the implications of the pandemic on Africa's fragile health structures, which were already battling with pre-existing crises amidst an endemic lack of adequate data and monitoring capacities. The second session, on 4 June, focused on the socio-political impacts of COVID-19, and the prospects for Africa's youth in the aftermath of the crisis. The third session of the Forum, on 5 June, looked at the economic fallout from the pandemic and the potential for Africa to build back better and stronger.

Each session included a representative from the Now Generation Forum (NGF), a convening of emerging African leaders and young professionals from across the continent that was held around the same theme. The aim was to ensure that the high-level debate reflected the perspectives, expectations and experiences of the continent's majority – its youth.

In between sessions of the Ibrahim Forum, Mo Ibrahim was joined by Charles Michel, President of the European Council, and H.E. Mahamadou Issoufou, former President of Niger and winner of the 2020 Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership, for candid one-on-one discussions on the future of Africa's democracy, governance and international partnerships.

Discussions at the Governance Weekend were informed by new research from the Mo Ibrahim Foundation in the 2021 Forum Report, which presented a comprehensive, data-driven analysis of COVID-19 in Africa, the challenges exposed by the pandemic and the lessons learned.

This report summarises the outcome of these fact-based, Africa-led discussions. We hope you find it interesting and we welcome your feedback.



## Session 1

# Lessons from the pandemic: an urgent call to strengthen Africa's health capacities

*While the first wave of the pandemic in Africa was relatively mild compared to other regions, the subsequent ones are proving more devastating. Poor data capacity could conceal a concerning underestimation of the actual impact.*

*Having learnt from previous pandemics, the continent's reaction in terms of prevention has been swift. But this crisis has laid bare the concerning fragility of basic health structures, and vaccine distribution remains insufficient. How can these key challenges be solved?*

### Panellists

#### MODERATOR

**Jendayi Frazer**

50 Ventures, President and CEO

**Prof Agnes Binagwaho**

Africa Europe Foundation

Health Strategy Group, Vice Chair

#### KEYNOTE

**Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus**

WHO, Director-General

**Gayle Smith**

US State Department, Coordinator for Global COVID response

**Dr John Nkengasong**

Africa CDC, Director

**Reeta Roy**

Mastercard Foundation, CEO

**President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**

The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, Co-Chair

NOW GENERATION FORUM REPRESENTATIVE

**Mandipa Ndlovu**

Leiden University, PhD candidate

While COVID-19 has had a profound impact on health systems and economies in Africa, the continent has not seen the same scale of devastation as other regions. Even though it is home to almost 18% of the world's population, Africa accounted for just 3.0% of global confirmed cases and 3.8% of global deaths as of 1 May 2021. However, there is no room for complacency. Africa's average case fatality amounts to 2.7%, higher than the global average of 2.1%. While some African countries are still battling the second wave, others are already experiencing a third wave, and we can expect to see some countries going into a fourth wave soon. The recent dramatic spike in cases and death toll in India may be a window into a not-so-distant future for other parts of the world. The first session of the 2021 Ibrahim Forum brought these issues into focus, assessing the health impact on the continent and the challenges countries face going forward.

According to Dr John Nkengasong, Director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (AfCDC), there was an average increase of about 14% in COVID-19 cases across the continent between the last week of May and the first week of June 2021. In fact, serological surveys conducted in several African countries suggest that the official figures may be underestimating true case numbers. For instance, a study conducted in Lagos, Nigeria, shows that over 20% of its inhabitants have been exposed to the virus. Despite this, Dr Nkengasong said that even if the mortality rate was underestimated by four-fold, with approximately 130,000 lives lost due to COVID-19 in Africa as of the beginning of June 2021, as yet, the pandemic has not been as devastating compared to other world regions.

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Co-chair of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, noted that most countries globally, including some of the wealthiest, ignored recommendations from top scientists and delayed the response to the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, 3.5 million lives have been lost globally, including 17,000 health workers, and the economic impact, by the end of 2021 alone, will amount to ten trillion dollars. Against this backdrop, a potential explanation for Africa's relatively lower number of COVID-19 cases and death toll may be the early and coordinated response across the continent, building on the experience from previous pandemics such as the 2013-2016 Ebola outbreak in West Africa. Under the leadership of the African Union (AU) and the AfCDC, the implementation of public health measures by African countries was swift. Almost all African countries had some form of internal movement restrictions within the first month of the first confirmed case. In addition, the introduction of robust international travel restrictions for



**“Disinvestment in our technical institutions has really rendered statistical data on healthcare often an estimation rather than a fact.”**

Mandipa Ndlovu, Leiden University PhD candidate and Now Generation Forum participant, Zimbabwe

foreigners were among the fastest in the world. More than half of the 23 countries that had the most stringent restrictions at the date of their first confirmed case are African.

**Professor Peter Piot, Director, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine:** *"Africa has much to be proud of in its response to the pandemic. Leaders responded early and in a coordinated manner with swift implementation of public health measures. And when it comes to epidemics, early action is critical, there is no time to lose."*

In his keynote address, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), outlined that only 31 million COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered in Africa so far, amounting to 2% of the global total. The WHO is working tirelessly with the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility (COVAX) to bring immediate solutions for equitable vaccine distribution. However, commitments by high-income countries to provide the 92 low- and middle-income countries participating in COVAX with at least 1.3 billion vaccine doses by the end of 2021 are falling short. No one is safe until everyone is safe. The top priority now is to ensure global vaccine equity. According to Professor Piot, this is not only a moral imperative, but also critical for pandemic control everywhere. For this reason, ahead of the G7 Summit (which was held 11-13 June 2021), Dr Nkengasong asked G7 leaders to share any excess doses immediately so Africans can be vaccinated at "speed and scale". Pascal Lamy, President of the Paris Peace Forum, warned that Africa is on the verge of a "vaccine apartheid".

The COVID-19 pandemic has also underlined the importance of investing in Universal Health Coverage (UHC), based on primary healthcare and strong community engagement. Dr Tedros emphasised the importance of strengthening local health systems for global health security. He warned that it was unlikely that Africa will be able to take on a new and deadly virus if it cannot provide care for basics such as maternal healthcare and the treatment of diabetes. COVID-19 has revealed structural weaknesses in Africa's health systems, with too few health workers and hospital beds compared to other world regions. As the focus has shifted to COVID-19, a resurgence of diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS is also taking place.

**Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization (WHO):** *"The pandemic has underlined why it's so important to invest in Universal Health Coverage, based on primary healthcare and strong community engagement. Global health security begins in our local clinics and health systems."*



**"We need vaccines and we need them quickly on the continent. Anyone that has excess doses, now is the time to redistribute those doses so that we can vaccinate our people at speed and scale. Otherwise, Africa will be moving towards endemicity of this virus, which wouldn't bode well for collective health security."**

Dr John Nkengasong, Director,  
Africa Centres for Disease  
Control and Prevention (AfCDC)

Dr Okonjo-Iweala, Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), reminded participants that just ten countries are responsible for 80% of the world's vaccine exports. The stark inequities in the global distribution of COVID-19 vaccines show that this concentration of vaccine production does not work. The global architecture for vaccine production was built for about five billion vaccines a year, whereas 11 to 14 billion are needed currently, explained Gayle Smith, Coordinator for Global COVID Response at the US Department of State.

While the short-term goal is to convince wealthy nations to share excess vaccine doses and increase funding for the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator and the COVAX Facility, strengthening regional manufacturing capacities in the medium-term is essential to ensure equitable access to vaccines in the future and strengthen our collective health security. Initiatives such as the MoU signed between the AU and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) to boost African vaccine Research & Development and manufacturing will help achieve this. As will the €1 billion Team Europe initiative on manufacturing and access to vaccines, medicines and health technologies in Africa, announced by European Commission (EC) President Ursula Von der Leyen at the G20 Global Health Summit in Rome on 21 May 2021.

According to Dr Okonjo-Iweala, trade can support such efforts by redistributing and decentralising vaccine production. Regardless of the ongoing debate about a temporary waiver on the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS) Agreement for COVID-19 products, especially for vaccines, technology transfers will be fundamental to expanding global vaccine supply. Existing vaccine manufacturing capacities in several emerging and developing markets (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, Senegal and South Africa) were identified at a recent WTO-hosted manufacturers' conference. Leveraging these is essential to addressing the current global supply constraint quickly.

**Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director-General, World Trade Organization (WTO):** *"It is anomalous that a continent like Africa, with 1.3 billion people, imports 99% of its vaccines and 90% of its pharmaceuticals."*

Furthermore, as highlighted by Reeta Roy, CEO of the Mastercard Foundation, it is important not to overlook the many interlinkages between health and the economy. Healthcare constitutes an important economic sector with significant employment potential in Africa.



**"A rise in health expenditures across the continent could unlock \$89-90 billion dollars annually across the continent and it could unlock 10 to 15 million jobs."**

Reeta Roy, CEO,  
Mastercard Foundation

**Perspectives from the Now Generation Forum (NGF):**

- The effects of COVID-19 are felt by most Africans, with more severe impacts on the youth, women, girls and those in conflict situations.
- Participants opposed Africa's excessive dependency on external actors for vaccines with a concerted view that this dependency is a product of years of neglect of Africa's manufacturing industries.
- African countries should strengthen their basic health capacities by committing sufficient finances to the health sector, providing health infrastructure and adequately remunerating health professionals to check the brain-drain of Africa's medical human resources.
- They should consider developing and utilising Africa's indigenous health systems as many Africans already utilise traditional medicines and health professionals.

*Fiona Umulisa, NGF participant, Rwanda: "The COVID-19 pandemic has opened our eyes to the fact that health is a cross-cutting issue. Thus, governments need to be very intentional when it comes to budget allocation and policies in the health sector."*



## Key takeaways

- **The recent dramatic spike in cases and death toll in India may be a window into a not-so-distant future for other parts of the world.** While Africa has not yet seen the same scale of devastation experienced by other world regions, the impact of COVID-19 in Africa has still been profound in terms of lives, livelihoods, health systems and economies on the continent. Africa's leadership has been praised globally for responding early and in a coordinated manner to the crisis, however, there is no room for complacency.
- **The top priority now is to get vaccines to African countries at speed and scale.** Without equitable access to these, the COVID-19 virus risks becoming endemic in Africa. Any country with excess doses must redistribute vaccines to contribute to the control of the pandemic everywhere.
- **Basic health provision cannot be secured by relying on others.** The stark inequities in the global distribution of COVID-19 vaccines show that Africa cannot rely solely on imports from the rest of the world. Just ten countries are responsible for 80% of vaccine exports and Africa imports 99% of its vaccines.
- **The socio-economic potential of the health sector should not be overlooked.** Increased investment will have to be accompanied by a skilled health workforce to meet Africa's challenges.
- **Investment to support the regionalisation and decentralisation of the production of vaccines and other pharmaceuticals is key to strengthening global health security.** While the global architecture for vaccine production was built for around five billion vaccines a year, current needs require up to 14 billion.
- **Africa must be fully integrated in the global circuit of vaccine and wider medical research, development and manufacturing,** feeding into best practices in both the Global North and Global South. It is very important to ensure that the continent gets access to latest technologies (e.g. mRNA, immunotherapy) with the potential to help address some of its long-standing health challenges.
- **It is imperative to transform the international system of pandemic preparedness and response to prevent future disease outbreaks from becoming pandemics.** More attention needs to be paid to prevention and preparedness, especially at the institutional level.





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## Session 2

# Managing the pandemic fallout: setbacks in democracy and rights, and new triggers of instability

*The pandemic has jeopardised recent progress in education and gender equality. Most scheduled elections have been held, but the enforcement of lockdown measures and restrictions to media freedom have resulted in democratic limitations.*

*With prospects for young people squeezed, the pandemic has opened up power vacuums and propaganda opportunities for extremist groups. What are the current risks of further deterioration and how can they be addressed?*

### Panellists

#### MODERATOR

**David Pilling**

Financial Times, Africa Editor

#### KEYNOTE

**Amina J. Mohammed**

United Nations, Deputy Secretary General

**Patrick Youssef**

International Committee of the Red Cross, Africa Director

**Comfort Ero**

International Crisis Group, Africa Programme Director

**Elhadj As Sy**

Kofi Annan Foundation, Chair

**Laurence Chandy**

UNICEF, Director of Global Insight & Policy

**NOW GENERATION FORUM REPRESENTATIVE****Abiy Shimelis**

Addis Sustainable Life, Co-founder

The second session of the 2021 Ibrahim Forum focused on what moderator David Pilling, Africa Editor of the Financial Times, described as “the less obvious, perhaps the more hidden... side effect of the COVID pandemic”: the impact on politics and society. Panellists discussed what the pandemic meant for education, democracy and conflict in Africa, as well as for the continent’s large youth population.

In the keynote address, Amina J. Mohamed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, highlighted that the pandemic is jeopardising recent development progress in Africa, notably in poverty reduction, education and gender equality. Achieving the UN’s Sustainable Development Agenda by 2030 has become more challenging.

The impact on learning is probably one of the least visible effects of the pandemic, said Laurence Chandy, Director of Global Insight and Policy at UNICEF. Using modelling on representative samples in Ethiopia, Kenya and South Africa, learning gains in 2020 were estimated to be about 30% to 50% of what would have been expected without the pandemic. Losses are more severe for younger children, particularly in rural areas and for the least proficient students. Dr Philipp Ackerman, Head of Political Affairs at the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasised that even before COVID-19, girls’ education in Africa was insufficient. More investment is needed to leverage the demographic dividend and give girls a chance to become productive parts of society. One way to curb these losses could be remedial education interventions, which have already been put in place in some countries, for example Ghana and Uganda.

**Laurence Chandy, Director of Global Insight & Policy, UNICEF:**

*“Although it is relatively easy to observe the number of kids who aren’t going to school, or the number of schools that have shut their doors, it’s much harder to quantify how far children are falling behind on their learning.”*

The panellists agreed that with regard to democracy and security on the continent, the pandemic had accelerated some worrying trends.

Elhadj As Sy, Chair of the Kofi Annan Foundation, said the pandemic has “revealed dysfunctionalities that exist in our societies”. A general recession in democracy on the continent has resulted in some flawed elections. Holding elections upholds democracy but COVID-related restrictions prevent people from gathering, presenting something of a paradox. Comfort Ero, Africa Programme Director at the International Crisis Group, outlined that the democratic picture on the continent is mixed. Worrying backsliding trends can be observed in West Africa -



**“For the first time in two decades, we are seeing a rise in extreme poverty, informal workers have lost their jobs, school closures and digital divides are jeopardising hard-fought gains in learning, and progress towards gender equality might be pushed back a generation.”**

Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary General, United Nations

"a region that was long considered the leading champion on the continent for democratisation and conflict resolution" - and transitions are marred by violence in countries previously considered to be on a good path, such as Chad, Ethiopia or Sudan. However, there are also positive and hopeful examples for democracy in Africa, such as Ghana, Malawi, South Africa or Tanzania. Term extensions and restrictions to democratic space and rights push people out of democratic processes and disenfranchise them, with the risk that they resort to other means to challenge their leaders. It is important to create an enabling environment for the democratic process while protecting people from COVID at the same time.

Patrick Youssef, Africa Director at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), outlined the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic for areas affected by violence and conflict where health infrastructures are weak. The large and rising numbers of refugees and internally displaced populations on the continent are of particular concern. Over 60 million people live in areas which are not controlled by government and run by non-state armed groups, where access to vaccinations might be lacking and where insecurity for healthcare workers is high. However, ensuring that communities are not left behind in vaccination campaigns is crucial in order to curb the spread of the virus and the development of new variants. Amina J. Mohamed warned that vaccine inequity can add to "cracks in the social fabric", compounding problems of social inclusion and undermining trust in leaders and faith in democracies.

**Patrick Youssef, Africa Director, International Committee of the Red Cross:** *"The pandemic has been devastating for areas affected by conflicts and violence, and where healthcare systems are weak. Beyond the predicted fatalities from COVID-19, we are all concerned about the knock-on effects, the secondary reverberating impacts on people's welfare and security at large."*

According to Comfort Ero, "COVID has been a complicating factor but even before COVID, conflict resolution on the continent has fared no better. In fact, there was conflict before the pandemic, and it will continue after the pandemic, because all the ingredients that give cause to these conflicts were there regardless of COVID". For example, the crisis in Ethiopia had been brewing before COVID, while the crisis in Mozambique also would have unfolded regardless of the pandemic. Another issue of concern highlighted by the panellists is the polarisation of the media along ethnic and political lines, which has contributed to destabilisation in the Ethiopian context, for example. Yet, political



**"Key priorities are a democratic space where rights are respected, where leaders are trusted, where active citizenship is exercised, an enabling environment for the expression of different views, and a culture of parallels and respect."**

Elhadj As Sy, Chair,  
Kofi Annan Foundation



leaders have been incapable of finding political solutions. Conflict prevention is essential to get the AU's 'Silencing the Guns' project back on track. While the AU and the UN continue working to keep Africa on the agenda, the willingness of member states is key for effective crisis prevention and resolution. Conflicts on the continent are often brewing long before erupting but there is a weak link between early warning and early action. Africa needs comprehensive approaches to solve conflict; military solutions alone are not enough, as shown by the example of the Sahel. The potential decline in financial support from key donors for those most in need is concerning. The UK, for example, has recently made significant cuts to its aid to Africa.

The panel also discussed whether and how the social contract between citizens and government might have changed over the pandemic, with a particular focus on youth. According to a global poll conducted by UNICEF and Gallup, young people across seven African countries are feeling optimistic about their future and as citizens of the world. However, there is a clear underutilisation of talent on the continent. Abiy Shimelis, Co-founder of Addis Sustainable Life and an NGF representative from Ethiopia, confirmed the youth's optimism. He pointed out that young people are changing the way they express their frustrations, including through social media, civic activism and protests. Old leaders are still running countries with large youth populations and young people are getting impatient with being locked out of the political system. There is a clear thirst for democracy and change on the continent. The youth's desire for change is likely to be accompanied by more protests and violence. Their demands are clear: they want livelihoods, education, relevant opportunities and political participation. The engagement, talent and optimism of Africa's youth offers a ray of hope.

Good governance is key and should be the starting point to collectively harness capacities and competencies on the continent. A sustainable approach that brings together humanitarian and development actors, as well as connecting the international system with local efforts, is essential. Elhadj As Sy argued that the social contract needs to be rebuilt in the most vulnerable communities. While governance can mean many different things, it is essential that leaders deliver on their promises, build trust and give room to active citizenship. The decisive action African leaders demonstrated throughout the crisis needs to be carried into the recovery period. Transparency in decision-making needs to be increased and the SDGs should be used as a roadmap for an inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery that can build trust and promote stability.



**“As a young person, I feel let down... Young people, now more than ever, are expressing their frustrations and aspirations. But they need to feel they are being heard.”**

Abiy Shimelis, Now Generation Forum Representative, Ethiopia

### **Perspectives from the Now Generation Forum (NGF):**

- Participants discussed the inadequacy of remote learning opportunities, the digital divide in education on the continent and its unequal impact on rural children. The group stressed an urgent need for governments to prioritise investment in IT infrastructure to bridge the digital divide and ensure access to education, especially for girls.
- The group noted the limitations that the pandemic presented for the holding of elections. To prevent the postponement of elections during subsequent emergencies, Africa should strengthen its institutions and also prioritise constitutional rule at all times.
- The cohort recommended a grassroots response to COVID-19 and other challenges affecting the continent. A bottom-up approach to governance is preferred to a top-down approach.
- Participants bemoaned the abuse of power by some African governments during the pandemic. Many reported that under the guise of COVID-19, some countries violated democratic principles through the enforcement of lockdown measures by state security and threats to media information.
- Governments should urgently tackle the rising rates of unemployment. This could be done by modernising agriculture and boosting trade between African countries to create jobs.
- The active participation of the youth in politics could help to achieve real changes to governance systems in Africa and the enactment of more youth-focused policies.

*Sepiso Dean Mwamelo, NGF Participant, Tanzania: "We should make sure that our recovery strategy comes from the people who are experiencing the challenges that were brought about by the pandemic"*



## Key takeaways

- **The pandemic has been an accelerator of pre-existing concerning trends in human development, democratisation and security.**
- **If Africa wants to maximise its demographic dividend, a strengthened focus on education, especially for girls and women, is key.** As the continent with the youngest population globally, the impact of COVID-19 on learning might be one of the least visible consequences, but one that could carry grave consequences for the future of a whole generation of Africa's youth.
- **The response to the pandemic, or other crises, should not create a hostile environment for democratic processes.** Term extensions and the restriction of democratic space and rights push people out of democratic processes and disenfranchise them, increasing the risk of their resorting to other means to challenge their leaders.
- **Beyond COVID-19 fatalities, there are concerns about the knock-on effects on people's welfare and security.** With rising numbers of refugees and internally displaced people on the continent, it is crucial that vulnerable communities are not left behind. Vaccine inequity can add to cracks in the social fabric, compounding problems of social inclusion and undermining trust in leaders and faith in democracies.
- **More generally, conflict prevention and resolution require comprehensive approaches and the ownership of resources.** Conflicts on the continent are often brewing long before erupting, and more comprehensive approaches to conflict prevention and early warning capacity must be adopted, as military solutions alone are not enough.
- **In the longer term, governance progress should be evenly balanced.** Security and participation, rights and inclusion have been on the decline in Africa long before the pandemic. Good governance is about ensuring these pillars are not left behind.
- **Also, going forward, inter-generational mobility and opportunities for young people are vital.** Young people are demanding a renewal of the social contract with their governments and they are increasingly taking matters into their own hands.

## **Mo Ibrahim in conversation with Charles Michel**

On the second day of the Governance Weekend, Mo Ibrahim held a conversation with Charles Michel, President of the European Council, to discuss Africa's relationship with the European Union.

Rapid decisive action has been crucial to combating the pandemic, as showcased by the European Union's (EU) swift mobilisation in financing the research of vaccines, culminating in their approval in under a year. Despite initial procurement issues, hundreds of millions of doses are being exported today. However, a pressing question remains around Africa's share and what Europe can do to remedy the growing "vaccine apartheid". Alongside the World Health Organization (WHO), the EU launched the COVAX initiative early into the pandemic to guarantee access to vaccines everywhere because as Charles Michel says: "we are not safe until everyone is safe". Nevertheless, while COVAX is now funded, the bottleneck has been in providing quick access to doses. As such, the last European Council meeting approved the decision to donate 100 million doses to countries in need.

A key lesson has also been the diversification of supply chains and the reduction of import dependency to strengthen Africa's resilience. Currently 99% of vaccines are imported, and as Mo Ibrahim put it, "this cannot continue". Gains in manufacturing will require technology and knowledge transfers as well as urgently addressing questions of intellectual property. If successful, vaccine manufacturing capacity expansion could exemplify the new mindset for the partnership between Europe and Africa envisioned by Charles Michel as the "New Deal for Africa". Championing a multilateral approach and an equal partnership, Charles Michel underscored the importance of cooperation and fairness to ensure the success of this project. It is, however, not only a question of money or institutions, but also of trust amongst the people sitting around the table. As such, the Council is cooperating with AU Chair Moussa Faki as well as supporting the political leadership of African heads of states and governments. The upcoming summit between the EU and AU will be a key moment to both act and deliver for people in Africa and Europe. This is part of the reasoning behind the increased budget for EU partnerships with Africa from \$20 billion to \$29 billion over the coming years.

The G7 meeting can provide an opportunity to further discuss financing for the African continent with regards to vaccine distribution, the issuance of a new round of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the question of debt relief.



As Mo Ibrahim pointed out, the few African countries who can borrow money in Africa have to pay excessive interest rates. This new round of SDRs could help reduce the debt burden and increase the resilience of African economies. This is in stark contrast to European governments and the EU who borrowed heavily at rather low cost to support their locked down populations and closed businesses. Nevertheless, of the \$650 billion SDRs issuance, less than seven percent is allocated to African countries. The Paris Summit saw French President Emmanuel Macron pledging the reallocation of \$100M out of the \$650M additional SDRs to Africa. Despite this encouraging initiative, proposals for deferring interest on debt were met with lukewarm reactions and a counterproposal about sovereign debt which constitutes less than half of the total debt. Charles Michel highlighted the importance of mobilising domestic resources, to enlarge the taxation basis which is key for private investments and expanding fiscal capacities of African governments. As he said, "each side should think which part can I put on the table to make the deal efficient and concrete for our people".

Climate change, meanwhile, is already exacerbating existing tensions in Africa such as those surrounding the Grand Renaissance Dam on the Nile, with the impending rainfall season further aggravating the risk of conflict erupting. While Charles Michel and the Council are in communication with the leaders of Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan, they are adamant that the AU must play the role of active observers in reaching a legal and negotiated solution, with first responsibility falling into the hands of regional organisations. The G5 Sahel and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) can play a key role. More generally, any progress against security threats needs both fighting the terrorists and supporting the population through strengthening democratic institutions.

*Charles Michel, President, European Council: "This obsession for the future, this obsession for a strengthening of the partnership based on the idea of mutual interest, of equal footing, will be very important if we want to deliver for our people in Africa and in Europe."*









## Session 3

# Looking ahead: a key opportunity to reinvent Africa's growth model

*COVID-19 has led to economic recession in Africa for the first time in 30 years, further worsening unemployment, poverty and food insecurity on the continent.*

*Can this crisis provide an opportunity to define a new growth model that is more resilient, more equitable, more sustainable and more self-reliant? How can Africa build back better and stronger?*

### Panellists

MODERATOR

**Uche Okoronkwo**

CGTN Africa

KEYNOTE

**Dr Donald Kaberuka**

African Union, Special Envoy  
on COVID-19

**H.E. Albert Muchanga**

African Union Commission,  
Commissioner, Trade & Industry

**Dr Vera Songwe**

UNECA, Executive Secretary

**Dr Ibahim Mayaki**

AUDA-NEPAD, CEO

**Rosa Whitaker**

Whitaker Group, President & CEO

**Sandra Kramer**

European Commission,  
Africa Director

NOW GENERATION FORUM  
REPRESENTATIVE

**Ma Soukha Ba**

Private sector development  
specialist

The third and final session of the 2021 Ibrahim Forum focused on the impact of the crisis on Africa's economy, which has been hit hard by the first recession in 30 years. At the same time, the crisis has created an opportunity to 'build back better' and put in place a real strategy for sustainable and inclusive economic growth. The session set out to evaluate the most striking impacts of COVID-19 on the continent's economies, as well as solutions proposed and the prospects for new growth.

In the keynote address, Dr Donald Kaberuka, AU Special Envoy on COVID-19, broached the question of reinventing Africa's growth models. While highlighting the success of African institutions, such as the AfCDC, in combatting the virus in comparison to other regions, Dr Kaberuka pointed to the high economic toll on the continent. He noted the far-reaching lessons in relation to global supply chains, with serious questions raised as to whether African countries can rely on these in future emergencies. Dr Kaberuka noted that the international response during the pandemic had been very underwhelming, taking months to provide support to African countries in need. The crisis has revealed the great disparities in the fiscal and monetary response capacities of rich nations in comparison to others. He highlighted that while rich countries can print money and introduce large fiscal response packages, African countries cannot. Going forward, Dr Kaberuka emphasised that the post-pandemic growth models must be inclusive. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is an opportunity to bring key supply chains, such as for vaccines, to Africa, while also suggesting that the link between health expenditures and economic outcomes will have to be better analysed going forward.

The panel discussion revolved around several key themes, one of which was the issue of financing and government debt. Sandra Kramer, Africa Director at the European Commission, highlighted the support provided by the EU, which she stated, "had been on the side of Africa since the outbreak of the pandemic". She pointed to the eight billion dollars mobilised by the EU in support of Africa's COVID-19 response. This direct budget support has created immediate fiscal space for governments. Rosa Whitaker, President and CEO of the Whitaker group, was more sceptical about existing aid models used by Europe and the United States, which come with too many conditionalities. She argued that it is not clear where aid money goes, with funds often not reaching Africa but rather staying in the "bloated industrial aid complex of NGOs and consulting firms". Going forward, Rosa Whitaker suggested that a "united and concerted African model" was needed, which could guide engagement with donors. Sandra Kramer suggested the need to move past the old-fashioned donor recipient model, advocating instead for



**"Unless a new growth model is inclusive, unless that model lifts all boats, not simply some boats, unless that model reinforces social safety nets, it cannot be sustainable."**

Dr Donald Kaberuka,  
Special Envoy on COVID-19,  
African Union



“equal partnerships with responsibilities and interests on both sides of the equation”.

Rosa Whitaker asserted that Africa’s post-COVID economic recovery “is going to need a lot of financing”, particularly for infrastructure. This sentiment was echoed by NGF representative and private sector development specialist, Ma Soukha Ba, and UNECA Executive Secretary, Dr Vera Songwe. However, Ms Whitaker followed up by insisting that infrastructure finance “shouldn’t be ceded to China alone”. She suggested Africa could raise finance by leveraging the 46 trillion-dollar bond market and that socialised bonds could be issued by Afreximbank. Ma Soukha Ba emphasised that on the issue of finance, Africa needs to mobilise domestic and internal resources, including the continent’s savings.

Moderator Uche Okoronkwo noted that Africa is at the bottom of global averages when it comes to domestic resource mobilisation, raising the question of taxation systems. Dr Hamady Diop, Supervisor of Technical Cooperation and Advisory Services at AUDA-NEPAD, highlighted coordination at the regional level as a major obstacle, while Ms Whitaker suggested that investment in technology was required to build the capacity of Africa’s taxation systems and increased intra-African trade to bolster tax revenues. The issue of illicit financial flows was also raised, with Ma Soukha Ba claiming African countries needed to put in place reforms to tackle the bleeding of resources from the continent. Rosa Whitaker stressed the need for “punitive measures and some accountability for Western investors who create ... very complicated tax schemes [and] royalty schemes to make sure they do not show a profit in Africa in order to move ... as much revenue as possible back to the company.”

The issue of debt also played a prominent role in the discussions. Sandra Kramer pointed out that initiatives such as the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) and Common Framework for Debt Suspension Beyond the DSSI have helped African governments create fiscal space. Dr Songwe suggested that the DSSI had run its course and that “an on-lending of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) that allows [the creation of] a poverty reduction and growth facility (...) will really be able to provide some additional resources”. One idea presented by Dr Songwe was that SDRs could be used to create African Repo Markets and level the playing field for African borrowing. She explained that it is currently very expensive due to risk perception and the difficulty of turning bonds into liquid assets. Dr Songwe put forward that Repo Markets for African bonds would transform them into liquid assets and reduce the liquidity premium placed on African borrowing. Beyond the SDRs, the issue of concessional lending was highlighted by Dr Songwe. Citing the example



**“Governments have made choices; they have unfortunately cut away social protection service programmes to pay debt service interest. We are forcing economies to make choices they don’t need to make because there are resources out there that could respond to both of those questions.”**

Dr Vera Songwe, Executive Secretary, UNECA

of tourist dependent Cabo Verde, she noted that many economies classified as middle-income were hit badly during the pandemic, but were prevented from accessing concessional lending, with such arrangements restricted to low-income countries.

A second thread that ran throughout the panel session was the interdependent issues of trade, dependency and structural transformation. As Dr Kaberuka highlighted, many countries were quick to erect trade barriers when the crisis struck, causing much disruption for Africa and leaving big question marks over the reliability of international supply chains for the continent. Transforming the trading relationships of African countries was also a key message to come out of the NGF. Youth are keen for African countries to establish their own growth models rather than replicating Western models. In particular, they want the continent to “boost manufacturing and develop knowledge-based economies”. The NGF’s representative on the panel, Ma Soukha Ba, was keen to emphasise the pitfalls of current trade structures saying, “the old model of staying at the bottom of value chains” and “competing between ourselves to supply [raw materials and natural resources]” while receiving manufactured products isn’t serving Africans well, undermining sovereignty and reinforcing dependency.

**Ma Soukha Ba, NGF Representative, Senegal:** *“We need to have some level of sovereignty... in securing our basic needs... in terms of security, ... feeding ourselves, clothing ourselves.”*

Dr Kaberuka highlighted that the AfCFTA offers potential solutions to these issues, including the specific challenges of the pandemic, stating that the agreement “provides an opportunity to look at the supply of vaccines and key goods in Africa”. Ma Soukha Ba said young Africans support the AfCFTA but are keen to ensure that reforms champion African-owned businesses including SMEs. Young people would also like to see reforms extended to facilitate the free movement of people and ideas in addition to goods. Dr Songwe said the AfCFTA was Africa’s blueprint to escape the crisis but emphasised that the logistics systems that will underpin the agreement will require physical infrastructure, reminding all of the need to implement the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA).

Industrial transformation was also discussed in the context of the climate crisis and the need for a green recovery. Ma Soukha Ba stated that the entire agenda must be “tied to sustainability taking into account climate change”. Sandra Kramer pointed to the green nature of the EU’s engagements on the continent, which are distinguished by a focus on sustainability, asserting that the EU will not invest in fossil fuels. She also



**“The pandemic illustrates how profoundly dependent Africa is on the choices, the blunders, the actions and even sometimes the self-interests of others. I think we should look to dismantle Africa’s dependency.”**

Rosa Whitaker, President & CEO,  
Whitaker Group

highlighted that in Africa “there are abundant renewable energy sources that can be the engine for Africa’s economic and social transformation”. Dr Songwe agreed with the importance of a green recovery but noted that Africa must give itself time to transition, suggesting that gas can act as a transition fuel while moving away from coal and oil.

Africa’s digital potential was frequently revisited throughout the session. Rosa Whitaker highlighted digital transformation as an area “where Africa is leading.” She argued that “the continent needs to start by building on what’s working ... Africa has 64% of the world’s mobile transactions, with a value of over \$450 billion”. Sandra Kramer highlighted that “data is the resource of the 21<sup>st</sup> century”, while Dr Hamady Diop also saw technology as an opportunity for African countries to leapfrog. However, Dr Songwe pointed out that since the onset of the pandemic, “inequalities in the use of digital technologies are rearing their heads”.

### Perspectives from the Now Generation Forum (NGF):

- To ‘build back better’, participants agreed that the continent should avoid replicating western models of economic growth. Rather, Africa should focus on building an economic model that is African-oriented, more resilient and that works for the continent.
- The NGF called on governments, as a matter of urgency, to embark on industrialising the African continent as a means of creating more employment opportunities, while shifting Africa’s dependency on the external importation of goods as a means of diversifying African economies.
- On financing, the group called on governments to focus on domestic resource mobilisation. While the NGF was in favour of mobilising more taxes and savings to finance Africa’s economies, they warned that this is subject to addressing informality in the continent’s economies.
- The NGF advocated for changes in the way countries measure wealth beyond GDP, as this measure leads to distorted policy choices that do not always target citizens’ needs and neglect key issues such as sustainability. Preferably, wealth should be measured both at the individual and country levels.

*Fernandes Wanda, NGF Participant, Angola: “African countries need to seize this opportunity to interact more amongst themselves and to look for possibilities within the continent’s borders.”*



“We do have a blueprint for how we get out of this crisis: we grow out of the crisis by growing out sustainably.”

Dr Vera Songwe, Executive Secretary, UNECA



“There are abundant renewable energy sources that can be engines for Africa’s sustainable economic growth and bring important societal benefits.”

Sandra Kramer, Africa Director, European Commission





## Key takeaways

- **A new growth model is needed that is inclusive, sustainable and Africa-centred.** The current models of growth and trade have not utilised Africa's potential. The pandemic showcases the need to dismantle the model of economic dependency and build up the continent's own supply chains.
- **More needs to be done to mobilise the continent's internal and domestic resources.** The creation of efficient taxation systems should be at the heart of policy choices and measures that stop illicit financial flows bleeding from the continent must be strengthened.
- **There must be a stronger African voice for partnership that breaks from the obsolete donor-recipient model.** While there is a need to bolster underwhelming international support, Africa should step up its role as equal partner on the global stage and co-creator of solutions to its problems.
- **The on-lending of Special Drawings Rights (SDRs) is needed, while debt suspension has run its course.** Middle-income countries on the continent which have been hit hard must be reached. Besides providing the much-needed liquidity to African countries, SDRs can be used to reduce the cost of future debt through Repo Markets for African bonds.
- **The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) can act as the 'engine of recovery' on the continent,** laying the foundation of African-centred growth models and reducing dependence on imported goods.
- **The post-COVID recovery must tap into Africa's strengths,** including Africa's vast digital potential and the continent's opportunities in sustainable energy that can shape a green recovery.
- **Leadership and governance are of paramount importance.** The continent has shown strong leadership in response to the pandemic, but it needs to sustain this committed leadership for the recovery as well. Good governance is fundamental for a recovery that can generate a more sustainable, more equitable and Africa-centred future.





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## **Mo Ibrahim in conversation with His Excellency Mahamadou Issoufou**

On the final day, Mo Ibrahim held a conversation with former president of Niger and the winner of the 2020 Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership, His Excellency Mahamadou Issoufou.

The security situation in Niger and the region remains challenging, explained President Issoufou. Niger is fighting on several fronts in its border areas with Burkina Faso, Mali, the Lake Chad Basin and Libya. The countries in the Sahel remain in transition and are facing demographic, economic and social challenges in addition to the security challenges which puts them at the mercy of terrorist and criminal groups. These groups have existed in the Sahel for several years but the fall of President Ghaddafi in Libya in 2011 amplified the threats they pose as they gained access to weapons. The example of Libya has shown that democracy cannot be imposed from the outside.

In recent years, there have been notable successes in the fight against terrorism as all countries in the region have strengthened and pooled their operational and intelligence capacities, which are also being supported by international alliances. President Issoufou was optimistic about defeating terrorism but emphasised that the fight against terrorism is multifaceted and needs to encompass economic, socio-developmental, democratic and ideological dimensions.

When it comes to military coups on the continent and in the region, President Issoufou argued that the problem still stems from structural adjustment programmes and low investment into the security sector in the 1980s and 1990s. However, now that the relationship between security and development is being recognised, recruitment and training for the military is being strengthened and special forces for asymmetric threats are being set up. This should gradually lead to African armies becoming more professional. President Issoufou was confident that the tradition of coups in the region will be overcome moving forward and that countries will no longer need to outsource their security.

Regarding the COVID-19 crisis, Niger has taken early action which allowed the country to control the spread of the virus. However, like other countries in Africa, it suffered delays in its first instalment of vaccines, showing that solidarity at the global level has been insufficient. That is why Africa should not rely on the goodwill of others and start manufacturing its own vaccines. President Issoufou welcomed the AU initiative on the partnership for vaccine manufacturing and supported the lifting of vaccine patents. The AU, in cooperation with the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), is working on coordinating vaccine

manufacturing, production and sales across the continent with the goal of Africa manufacturing 60% of the vaccines it needs by 2040. The example of vaccines illustrates the need for African integration and the key commitment to the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Another challenge for Niger and the larger Sahel region is climate change and land degradation; the loss of biodiversity and the disappearance of ecosystems are visible almost everywhere. This can exacerbate poverty and terrorist activity. Niger has integrated environmental protection into its 3Ns initiative- Nigeriens Nourishing Nigeriens- while also fulfilling its contributions under the Paris Agreement. Support from bilateral and multilateral donors is not sufficient and support to fragile countries like Niger should be amplified.

Niger's high population growth rate has impeded the country's development. At the current economic growth and population growth rates, it would take Niger a century to become an emerging economy. Hence the country is taking measures to create the conditions for demographic transition and opening up the debate about family planning. The first measure is at the educational level by making school free and compulsory at least until the age of 16 in order to end early marriages and teenage pregnancies. The second measure is at the level of reproductive health by teaching women about birth spacing. A third measure relates to awareness raising by mobilising religious and traditional leaders to show that birth control and family planning are not incompatible with religion. Small declines in the population growth rate are already showing and Niger hopes to become an emerging economy 30 years sooner due to these measures.

President Issoufou highlighted that having values, goals and a vision is key for being a good leader. That is also why he never considered dynastic succession or tampering with the constitution as a means to stay in power. His goal was to modernise Nigerien politics and to eradicate tribalism from it. The death of President Déby of Chad and the resulting power struggle risks having destabilising effects on the whole region, highlighting that the fate of a country should not lie within a single person. President Issoufou emphasised that only with strong and stable institutions in place will Niger and the continent tackle the multiple challenges – security, demographic, economic and social – it faces.

**President Mahamadou Issoufou:** *"The fate of a country must not depend on a single person. (...) This is why, I insist so much on striving to set up strong democratic states and institutions. Because only strong democratic institutions can guarantee security, guarantee freedom and*

*order. When we are dealing with weak institutions, democracy fails and when democracy fails, we can fall into either anarchy or dictatorship. (...) We have to start working and focus on the establishment of democratic institutions that are strong and stable."*

## Concluding remarks

The 2021 Ibrahim Governance Weekend concluded with a conversation between Mo Ibrahim and event host Zeinab Badawi.

Across the three days, contributors called for urgent action to ensure that Africa is vaccinated as soon as possible, and outlined the opportunities ahead for a sustainable, African-led recovery.

In the concluding session, Mo Ibrahim highlighted that investment was urgently needed in Africa's health systems, as many countries on the continent were "caught short" by the pandemic. The critical issue of vaccine supply on the continent highlights the need for greater self-reliance and to cut dependency on imports.

Mo Ibrahim emphasised that Africa needs to industrialise so that "we can begin producing our own essential stuff". Noting the importance of a single market for this goal, he stressed that one regulatory regime was needed instead of 54 countries with 54 different regulatory regimes. Strengthening the AfCFTA to become an African common market would be a huge boost, as a market of 1.2 billion people would attract investment. Also touching on commodity dependence, the pressing need for African economies to move into more job-intensive economic activity was reiterated.

Mo Ibrahim expressed concern over the narrowing space for civil society on the continent. There have been worrying trends in human rights, participation and democracy over the last four or five years. The crisis has been used as an excuse to squeeze civil liberties and could compound these wider issues. On the flip side, he expressed faith in the younger generation on the continent, paying tribute to the Now Generation Forum panellists.

Finally, Dr Ibrahim expressed his disappointment with global solidarity and the slow pace of support measures from the international community. In particular, he noted that debt relief measures had been "limited or very small", and the small share of SDRs that Africa would receive. He also highlighted the hypocrisy shown by richer countries in claiming "nobody is safe until everybody is safe" but only providing limited support in terms of vaccine donations.



**"Crises are useful in understanding what doesn't work and how we need to change. We cannot continue to rely on old paradigms and empty commitments. We need to build a different Africa. We need to move forward and be self-reliant, leveraging the integration of our continent and the full potential of our youth."**

Mo Ibrahim, Founder and Chair,  
Mo Ibrahim Foundation

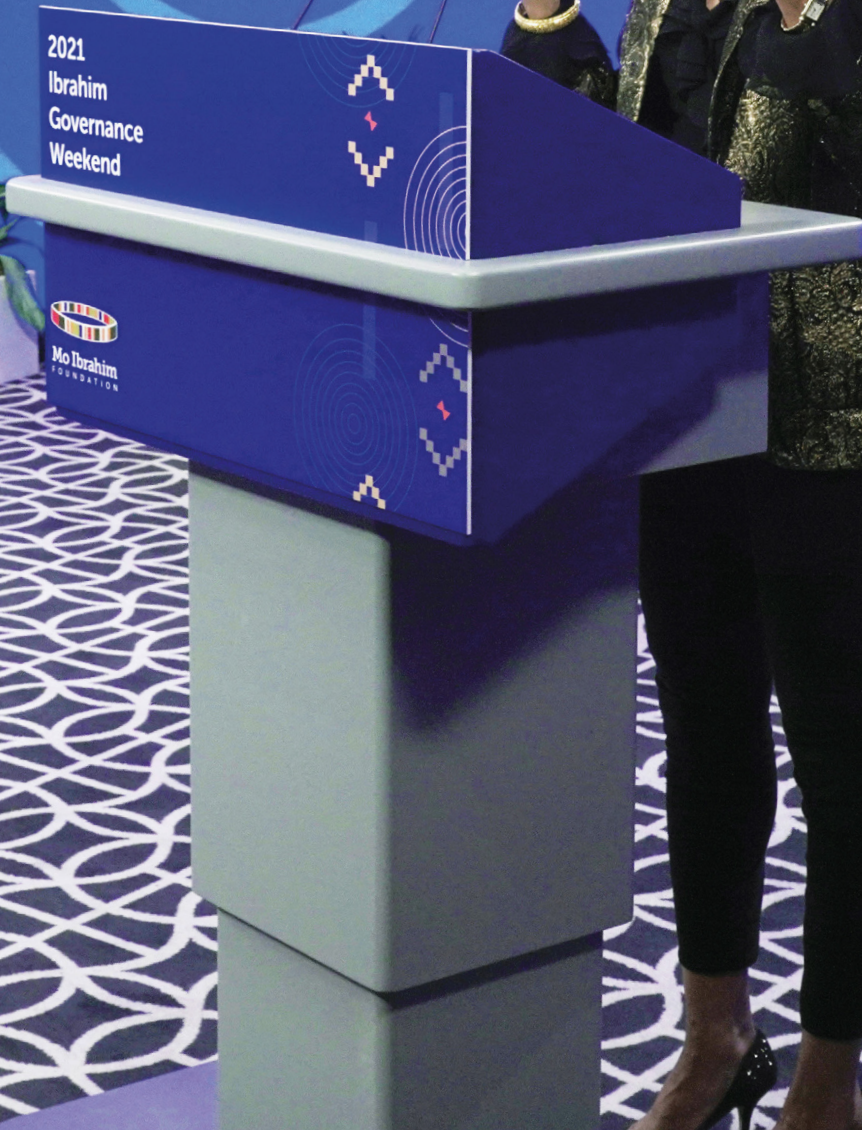


## Key messages

- Vaccines are a priority and Africa should meet its commitment to developing its own vaccine manufacturing capacity by 2040.
- Africa's health systems must be fit for purpose and not ignore the issue of brain drain. Countries should invest in health, meeting earlier commitments on health spending.
- Efforts towards the AfCFTA must be sustained and expanded, with the long-term aim of creating a fully integrated continental common market. It will prove challenging to industrialise Africa with 54 markets and a myriad of regulatory frameworks.
- The space for civil society has narrowed. COVID-19 shouldn't be used to clamp down on people's rights. The continent should pay attention to keeping up its democratic progress.
- Women and youth should be acknowledged as key engines for growth in Africa.
- Partners should keep promises made and support Africa in accessing sources of liquidity. They must not leave Africa behind.



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## **About the Mo Ibrahim Foundation**

The Mo Ibrahim Foundation was established in 2006 with a focus on the critical importance of political leadership and public governance in Africa. By providing tools to support progress in leadership and governance, the Foundation aims to promote meaningful change on the continent.

The Foundation, which is a non-grant making organisation, focusses on defining, assessing and enhancing governance and leadership in Africa through five main initiatives:

- Ibrahim Index of African Governance
- Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership
- Ibrahim Governance Weekend
- Ibrahim Fellowships and Scholarships
- Now Generation Network





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