

## **Remarks by H.E. Dr Monique Nsanzabaganwa, Deputy Chairperson, African Union Commission**

*At the Launch of CoDA Independent Task Team on the Development of Vaccines, and Equitable, Universal Access to Essential Vaccines and Vaccinations in Africa*

**21 June 2020**

*H.E. Chief Gabriel Osawaru Igbinedion, Chancellor, Igbinedion University*

*H.E. Godwin Obaseki, Governor of Edo State*

*H.E. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, Former President of Nigeria and Chair of the Board of CoDA, ably represented by H.E. Abdoulaye Bathily, Co-Founder and Board Member of CoDA*

*Prof. Benedict Oramah, President and Chairman, Board of Trustees, Afreximbank & Chairman, Board of Trustees for the African Union COVID-19 Response Fund*

*Honourable Dr Osagie Ehanire, Minister of Health, Federal Republic of Nigeria*

*H.E. Chief Lucky Igbinedion, Deputy Chancellor, Igbinedion University, Okada*

*Ms Souad Aden-Osman, Executive Director, Coalition for Dialogue on Africa (CoDA)*

*Other dignitaries present*

*Ladies and gentlemen*

On behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the entire leadership of the Commission, I welcome everyone of you to this milestone event to launch of CoDA Independent Task Team on the Development of Vaccines, and Equitable, Universal Access to Essential Vaccines and Vaccinations in Africa.

It is a great pleasure to witness this historic event that heralds a renewed involvement of the private sector in finding solutions to the challenges associated with vaccines and vaccinations in Africa.

Universities and research institutions are established as citadels of learning and excellence, and centres of intellectual prowess capable of leading research and discoveries on issues affecting human lives. However, for some reasons, public health research in Africa has suffered some setbacks in the past few decades partly because of insufficient investment in research and development. The gaps between public health research, the private sector and public policy in Africa continue to widen, partly because the African private sector has not shown sufficient interest in health sector research and development.

Public health research is capital intensive, but we must also realize that health business is everybody's business, judging from our experience with the COVID-19 pandemic. Apart from the lives lost, the private sector has been greatly affected, and that tells us that if the people are sick businesses will also be sick.

The private sector is the spirit of any nation because they give direction to human and economic development. When businesses don't play their role of uplifting the morale and helping to raise living standards sustainably, they lose their relevance.

It is therefore essential for the African private sector to be involved in public health research that will help find solutions to the health problems on the continent, most importantly at this time, the limited access to vaccines and vaccination.

Strengthening Africa's health systems requires a convergence of the private sector, policymakers, the community, the civil society, and healthcare practitioners. I am very much delighted that Igbinedion University Okada is taking up the challenge to champion this new initiative that will help increase research, development, manufacturing, and distribution of vaccines in Africa. I am confident that the platform that will be created by the initiative will help bring relevant stakeholders together to dialogue, consult and come up with great ideas and actions that will raise public health profile in Africa to a whole new level.

This private sector led initiative being launched today as a partnership between the Coalition for Dialogue on Africa (CoDA), Igbinedion University, Pan-African Manufacturers Association, and other partners is a wake-up call to other private universities and businesses in Africa to contribute towards strengthening healthcare services across the continent.

Strengthening healthcare provision is not just about making donations, it must include addressing the root causes of our healthcare problems, one of which is

research and development. I salute the courage of the founders and management of Igbinedion University for accepting the challenge to champion efforts to strengthen vaccine research, development and manufacturing in Africa and call on other private sector players in Africa to join the coalition by making meaningful investments in vaccine research and development on the continent.

I would like to assure you of the commitment and support of the African Union Commission to the success of this laudable home-grown initiative targeted at improving healthcare provision in Africa by improving access to vaccines and vaccination.

Thank you all and congratulations.