

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE ON AFRICA DAY**

**25 May 2021**

This year's Africa Day highlights arts, culture and heritage as levers for building the Africa we want. Africa's rich and diverse cultural and natural heritage is important for sustainable development, poverty reduction, and building and maintaining peace. It can provide a strong foundation for inclusive economic progress as the continent strives to meet the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 has triggered a global recession that has exposed deep-seated inequalities and vulnerabilities. It is endangering hard-won development gains throughout Africa and beyond. The pandemic has also heightened the drivers of conflict by increasing inequalities and revealing the fragility of governance in many nations, particularly in the delivery of basic services such as healthcare, education, electricity, water and sanitation. The impact of the pandemic has also been exacerbated by the climate crisis, which disproportionately affects developing nations.

To end the pandemic, support economic recovery and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we need to ensure equitable and universal access to COVID-19 vaccines. Currently, there is a profound imbalance in vaccine distribution among countries. The latest figures show that to date, African countries have received just two per cent of vaccines.

On this Africa Day, I renew my call to developed nations to stand in solidarity with Africa.