



LESOTHO

Ministry of Health
P.O. Box 514, Maseru – 100 Lesotho

Tel: (+266-22312836
22323010)

Fax: (+266-

REF: H/ORG/17

DATE:16 October 2024,

THE PANDEMIC FUND SECRETARIAT
WORLD BANK
WASHINGTON D.C
USA

Subject: Urgent Call for Increased Support to the Pandemic Fund

We, the Ministers of Health from across Africa, write with an urgent appeal for your continued financial and institutional support for the Pandemic Fund, a critical global instrument for pandemic prevention, preparedness and response (PPR).

Despite the diversity of our nations – each grappling with distinct health challenges, economic pressures and social contexts – one reality unites us: the threat of pandemics knows no borders. Our shared concern is that global attention and commitment to preventing, preparing for and responding to disease outbreaks is waning, just when sustained action is most needed.

Just two years ago, with broad international support and in the wake of the staggering loss of millions of lives and trillions of dollars in economic damage from COVID-19, the global community took an important step to address gaps in the global health security system. The establishment of the Pandemic Fund marked a historic step in addressing critical gaps in global health security. This unique, first-of-its-kind fund has since been instrumental in supporting low- and middle- income countries to build stronger health systems and develop the capacities needed to prevent, early detect, and rapidly respond to health emergencies and pandemics.

Already, the Fund is making an impact. It is providing critical support for strengthening disease surveillance, enhancing laboratory capacity and building health workforces capable of managing health threats and emergencies. In its first round of awards, about 30% of Pandemic Fund grants allocated were for projects in Sub-Saharan Africa – the region with the highest demand for its grants. More support is set to be announced later this month.

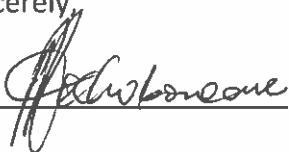
However, recent events remind us that our fight is far from over. The rapid spread of mpox provided another stark reminder of the fragility of health systems, the uneven access to essential services and tools across our continent, and how quickly the threat of another pandemic can reappear. In response, the Pandemic Fund fast-tracked US \$129M to support 10 African countries, demonstrating the Fund’s agility and commitment. This quick action has been pivotal in contributing to the containment of the spread of the outbreak and strengthening our capacity to be ready and respond.

We understand the fiscal constraints that governments face in the post-COVID period. All of us are managing competing priorities, and tough decisions are required. Yet, despite these challenges, we are taking necessary steps. The countries we represent are using Pandemic Fund financing as a catalyst, leveraging every dollar allocated to secure an additional US\$ 1.5 dollars from domestic co-investment from our governments’ budgets as well as external financing. This co-investment underscores our commitments to pandemic preparedness and our belief in the importance of shared responsibility.

But we cannot do this alone. The Pandemic Fund is now at a critical juncture. With most of its resources likely to be exhausted by mid-2025, an estimated \$US2 billion is needed to carry it through the next crucial phase (July 2025 and June 2027). Without this investment, the world risks backsliding into vulnerability, where preventable outbreaks could spiral into full-blown global health emergencies once again.

This is not just a matter of public health – it is an economic imperative. Investing in pandemic preparedness now is a modest cost compared to the staggering price of inaction. Timely support will save millions of lives and avert trillions of dollars in potential economic losses. Each of us has a shared stake in preventing the next pandemic. And the Pandemic Fund is our best chance to do so. We urge you to rise to this challenge and continue to support the Pandemic Fund. Together, we can build a safer, more resilient future for all.

Sincerely,



Selibe Mochoboroane
Minister of Health
Lesotho