

**Remarks by Dr. Azim Lakhani, Diplomatic Representative, AKDN Kenya
at the Aga Khan University & Ministry of Health Symposium
COVID-19 Response: Perspectives on Kenya
Thursday 22 October 2020, Nairobi Serena Hotel**

Honourable Joe Mucheru, Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry for ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs; Your Excellency Dr. Mohammed Kuti, Governor of Isiolo County; Dr. Alex Awiti, Vice-Provost of the Aga Khan University; Professor Lawrence Pintak, Dean of the AKU Graduate School of Media and Communications; Distinguished Guests; and our Distinguished Audience joining us virtually:

Good morning.

While fast becoming a cliché, in a space of just eight months the way of life of virtually the whole of humankind has changed. SARS-CoV-2 respects no geographic, gender, ethnic, or religious boundaries. Dealing with it requires coordinated efforts between the Government, commercial sector, civil society and individuals.

In Kenya, the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and the Ismaili Community have risen to the challenge. Here are some examples:

- The Diamond Trust Bank and Jubilee Insurance have made significant contributions to the Kenya COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund.

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- The Aga Khan University and the Aga Khan Health Service hospitals have increased capacity by creating a 103-bed field hospital on Aga Khan Council premises, 24 isolation beds and additional intensive care beds. In addition, over 19,000 nurses, midwives and community health workers have been trained in the care of COVID-19 patients.
- The Aga Khan University has participated in 25 COVID-19 Research Projects, Clinical Trials and Studies, as you will no doubt hear later. Over 1,100 COVID-19 stories have been conveyed through various media.
- The Diamond Trust Bank has restructured over 830 financial loan facilities for clients. In August DTB signed an Agreement with the International Finance Corporation for a substantial loan, as part of IFC's fast-track COVID-19 global facility, to enable small businesses to continue trading. The Bank has also been involved in protection and rehabilitation of water supplies to deliver clean water to 50,000 community residents in 2 Counties.
- The Aga Khan Education Service, the Aga Khan Academy Mombasa and the Aga Khan Council have provided access to online home-based learning for over 4,800 students; assisted with school fees for students in national and international curriculum schools; trained over 350 teachers in the use of distance-teaching platforms; and trained over 600 school faculty and staff in health, safety, security and well-being monitoring measures.

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- The Aga Khan Foundation has engaged with over 900 Civil Society Organisations to support vulnerable families and communities. AKF's online content on COVID-19 prevention measures, channelled through 1,900 Civil Society Organisations, has reached over 1.1 million people.
- The Industrial Promotion Services have provided continuing support to around 70,000 farmers in multiple supply chains.
- The Nation Media Group's COVID-19 public safety and awareness campaign reaches over 2.5 million readers, viewers and listeners daily and over 40 million digital users monthly through print, broadcast and digital media platforms; NMG's virtual *Nation Leadership Forum* sessions to date have focused on 24 Covid-related topics; and advertising space worth millions of Kenya Shillings has been donated to the Government.
- Serena hotels have provided free meals to frontline health workers.
- The Property Development and Management company has given commercial rent discounts to over 40% of property tenants.
- In many cases, our Agencies and the Ismaili Community have acted collectively, for example providing Personal Protection Equipment to health workers and food vendors across the country; distributing food-relief packages to over 6,500 vulnerable families across 12 Counties; and contributing over 90 Opinion Editorials from Subject Matter Experts on COVID-19.

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- In other cases, a lead Agency has been supported by others in the Network. The additional hospital bed capacity was supported by Diamond Trust Bank and Jubilee Insurance.

By any measure, this is an enormous gesture from a small community and a private network. Just the IFC loan to Diamond Trust Bank is worth US\$ 50 million.

AKDN operates in over 30 countries, and has benefited from international experiences, best practices and suppliers identified by our Global Covid Task Force. Our not-for-profit Social Development Agencies and for-profit Economic Development Agencies have around 175 sustainable individual programmes and initiatives, covering health care; education; financial services, industry, media and tourism. AKDN Kenya has over 16,000 full time employees, of whom over 99% are Kenyan. Annually it touches millions of Kenyans without regard to gender, race, ethnicity, religion etc.

The Network and the Ismaili Community have been present in Kenya for over 100 years and our development work has been guided by His Highness the Aga Khan, who is the Imam (spiritual leader) of the community as well as the Founder and Chairman of AKDN.

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While our planning remains long-term and strategic, we have shown, through our Covid related work, that we are resilient, flexible and able to adapt rapidly to changing circumstances.

Much of our work is undertaken in partnership with others where there is mutual interest. Principal amongst our many partners is the Government of Kenya. In this context, it is an honour to introduce our Chief Guest, Cabinet Secretary Joe Mucheru, who has been CS for ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs since 2015. Prior to his appointment, when he worked in the private sector, he was Country Manager for Google Kenya and was key to the setting up of Google's presence in Africa. CS Mucheru is no stranger to the Aga Khan Development Network. He officiated at the Commissioning of Nation Media Group's new Printing Press in 2016, in the presence of His Highness the Aga Khan, and just last month at the launch of Nation Media Group's new digital brand, *Nation.Africa*. Cabinet Secretary, we are delighted to have you with us again and it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to make some remarks.

ABOUT

The Ismaili Imam: The hereditary office of the *Imam* (spiritual leader) of the *Shia Ismaili* Muslims – His Highness the Aga Khan, concerned with the spiritual well-being of the global *Ismaili* community and the improvement of the material quality of life of *Ismailis* and those among whom they live.

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) is a global Network founded by His Highness the Aga Khan under the *Ismaili Imam* and is one of the instruments used by His Highness to deliver on the Mandate of the *Imam*. The AKDN brings together a number of development agencies, institutions, and programmes in many countries and across numerous social and economic sectors to improve the quality of life of the populations where the AKDN is present.

With over 100 years of contributing to the development of Kenya, the Network has the largest regional presence of Agencies with development institutions, programmes and initiatives designed to create conditions and opportunities to improve the quality of life and engender self-reliance for all beneficiaries.

The Aga Khan Council for Kenya is the social governance body of the *Shia Ismaili* Muslim community, which has been in Kenya for over 100 years, and focuses on improving the quality of life of the community through social welfare, economic, health, education, youth and women's programmes; all initiatives are underpinned and driven by a strong tradition of volunteerism.