

Ethiopian Prime Minister: 'If COVID-19 is not beaten in Africa, it will return to haunt us all'

In an [opinion column published in the *Financial Times*](#) two days ago, under the above headline, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmedi issued a sharp wake-up call to the international community.

Ahmedi wrote:

"There is a major flaw in the strategy to deal with the coronavirus pandemic. Advanced economies are unveiling unprecedented economic stimulus packages. African countries, by contrast, lack the wherewithal to make similarly meaningful interventions. Yet if the virus is not defeated in Africa, it will only bounce back to the rest of the world.

"That is why the current strategy of uncoordinated country-specific measures, while understandable, is myopic, unsustainable and potentially counter-productive. A virus that ignores borders cannot be tackled successfully like this.

"We can defeat this invisible and vicious adversary but only with global leadership. Without that, Africa may suffer the worst, yet it will not be the last. We are all in this together, and we must work together to the end.

"Fragile and vulnerable at the best of times, African economies are staring at an abyss," Ahmedi went on. He reviewed Ethiopia's own desperate situation: "access to basic health services remains the exception rather than the norm." Washing hands is "often an unaffordable luxury to the half of the population who lack access to clean water." Agriculture is still traditional and rain-dependent; if planting, weeding or harvesting are disrupted in order to stop the mass spread of the virus, the nation's already tenuous food supply is threatened.

"Momentary victory by a rich country in controlling the virus at a national level, coupled with travel bans and border closures, may give a semblance of accomplishment. But we all know this is a stopgap. Only global victory can bring this pandemic to an end," he reiterated.

"Covid-19 teaches us that we are all global citizens connected by a single virus that recognises none of our natural or man-made diversity: not the colour of our skin, nor our passports, or the gods we worship. For the virus, what matters is the fact of our common humanity."