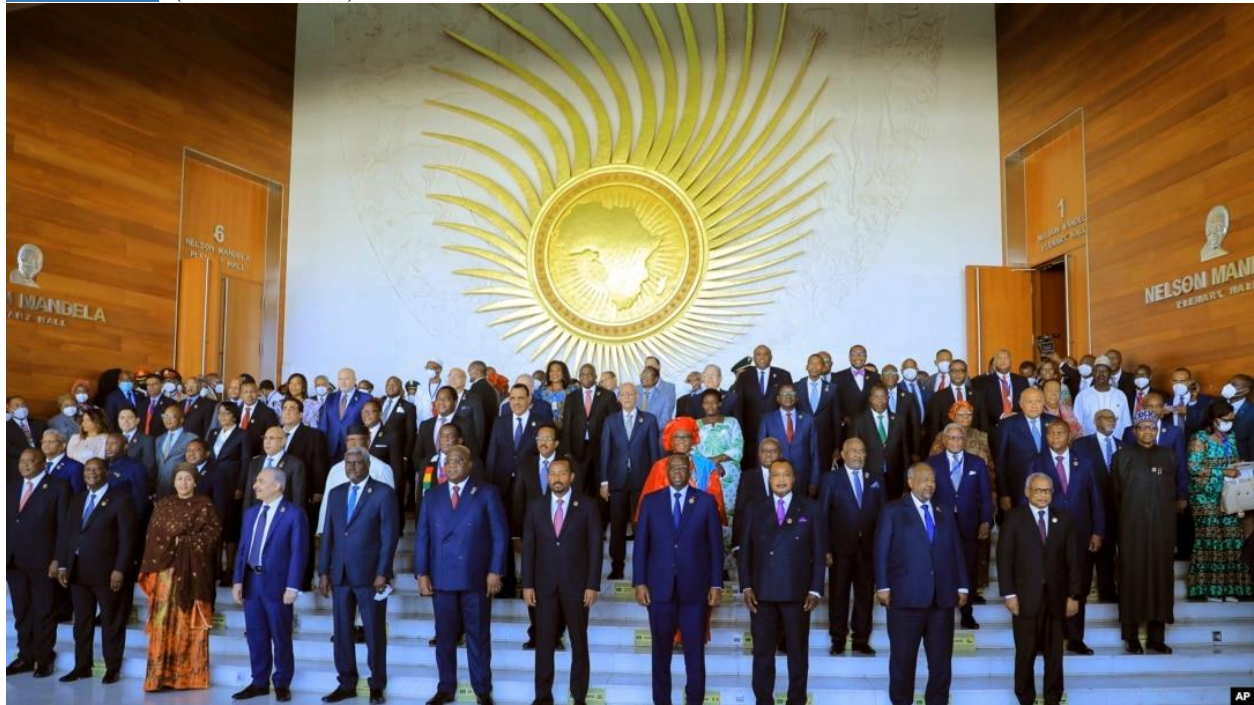


Pandemic and Security Top 35th African Union Summit

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[Gelmo Dawit](#) (Source – VOA)



African heads of state gather for a group photograph at the 35th Ordinary Session of the African Union (AU) Assembly in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Feb. 5, 2022.

The African Union has begun a summit in Addis Ababa, and the theme this year is “Strengthening Resilience in Nutrition and Food Security on African Continent; Strengthening Agro-food systems, health and social protection systems for the acceleration of human, social and economic capital development.” Leaders from across the continent gathered Saturday to discuss issues affecting the continent; mainly the pandemic and insecurity.

The 35th African Union session began Saturday in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa. Though its theme implies building resilience in nutrition and self-reliance in food, COVID-19 and security also top the agenda as coups and political instability continue to affect residents across Africa.

While addressing leaders of the continent, Musa Faki Mahamat, the chairperson of the African Union, said Africa is among the continents hit hard by COVID-19. He also raised concern about unavailability of vaccine for most Africans. He asked the African leaders to support the African Centers for Disease Control.

Chairperson Faki also shared his concern about deteriorating security in Africa. He says the AU has faced institutional failure because of coups and insurgencies. He called on regional blocks to closely work with the African Union and its member nations to abandon using 'their sovereignty' as pretext.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed is also among the leaders who addressed the summit. In his remarks, Abiy emphasized the will of his administration to end the 16-month conflict with Tigrayan rebels.

"As a gesture of goodwill, we have released high-profile suspects, with a view of creating [a] conducive environment for talk," said Abiy. "Consistent to our peaceful resolution of conflict, we have recently launched an inclusive national dialogue with formal legislation. Our commitment to pursue lasting and durable peace in our country shall remain steady fast."

Abiy asked leaders to echo his request for Africa to get permanent representation on the United Nations Security Council.

Additionally, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres addressed the session via videoconference. Guterres said Africa is being affected by climate change while contributing less than 3 percent of greenhouse gas emissions.

"To address this tragic reality, we need a radical boost in funding and adaptation and mitigation in the continent," said Guterres. "The Glasgow commitment to double adaptation finance from \$20 billion must be implemented."

Guterres noted he is working with the international community to meet Africa's climate change ambitions. He also called on African leaders to include youth in their administration and let citizens exercise their political and democratic rights.

Participants of the 35th extra ordinary summit of the African Union have named Senegalese leader Macky Sall as the new president of the AU.