

Africa Asks Russia for Coronavirus Aid: Foreign Ministry

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African leaders and financial institutions have warned that they are uniquely vulnerable to the pandemic without additional support. **Donwilson Odhiambo / ZUMA / TASS**

A number of unidentified African countries have asked Russia to assist them in the fight against coronavirus, Russia's Foreign Ministry said Tuesday.

The continent has [reported](#) 23,499 cases and 1,161 deaths across 54 countries as of late Monday, according to a tally by the pan-African news outlet African Arguments. African leaders and financial institutions have [warned](#) that they are uniquely vulnerable to the pandemic without additional support from outside.

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“The Africans need a wide range of medical equipment, including ventilators, test systems, personal protective equipment, disinfectants and supplies,” the Foreign Ministry in Moscow [told](#) the state-run TASS news agency.

“These applications are carefully reviewed and considered in accordance with the severity of the situation in a particular country,” it was quoted as saying.

The requests come after the G20, which includes Russia, agreed to freeze debt payments for the world’s poorest countries, many of which are in Africa.

Experts warn that the continent may be unable to stop the spread of Covid-19 because of its weak health systems combined with lockdown measures and low demand for minerals and tourism, the countries’ traditional sources of revenue.

The IMF expects the continent's gross domestic product to shrink by 1.6% in 2020, "the worst result ever recorded," and the World Bank has warned that the region could slip into its first recession in 25 years.

Russia, which has delivered coronavirus assistance to longtime allies like Serbia and Venezuela as well as Italy and the United States, has reported a total of 52,763 cases — the 10th-highest number worldwide — and 456 deaths as of Tuesday.

AFP contributed reporting to this article.

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