



## THE AFRICAN NETWORK OF PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION AUTHORITIES (RAPDP) DECLARATION IN COVID PERIOD

Or

### REGARDING THE PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19 PANDEMY

In recent months, the world has been going through an unparalleled health situation.

Indeed, the appearance of the Coronavirus or Covid-19 in December 2019, declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020, threatens the safety and well-being of people from all continents, particularly Africa. A pandemic that generates enormous exchanges of information.

Our States, as well as different organizations, are facing today unprecedented challenges in the fight against Coronavirus (COVID-19) spread, and its elimination. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated responses at both national and global level, which involves a quick sharing of personal information between organizations and governments.

It is also important to bear in mind that our states have been on the way to democracy and to the state of law for decades. This means that they must act within the framework of their regalian missions by ensuring respect for human rights, including respect for privacy and the protection of personal data.

Within the context of the fight against the pandemic, it is constant that measures against the spread of the virus are very often in violation of basic freedoms and human rights (among other things, geolocalization or tracking devices for COVID 19-infected people), any proposed measures must be absolutely necessary, proportional and limited in law, space, and time.

We are convinced that data protection requirements must not hinder the critical sharing of information to support the efforts to combat this global pandemic. Universal data protection principles in all our legislation allows for the use of data in the public interest with respect for human rights. Therefore, as we fulfill our mission and play our part in this fight, we, as personal data protection authorities, stand ready to assist and facilitate the prompt and secure sharing of data to combat COVID-19.

However, the collection and processing of personal data, which is qualified as sensitive by our legislation, must be subject to special precautions. This means that any violation must be proportionate. In addition, mass surveillance cannot be a sustainable solution because it involves, by nature, major risks for our societies.



Therefore, we, members of the RAPDP, are calling on governments, companies, researchers, and civil society to use precautionary principle to avoid creating further problems in the post-pandemic period. We urge them to limit themselves to necessary and proportionate measures and not to leave the door open to abusive practices and discrimination. Finally, in order to avoid intoxication and psychosis, it is recommended not to share information that is not proven true.

Our task as personal data protection authorities is to advise public authorities, and to protect the rights and freedoms of people regarding personal data processing. Notwithstanding the context of the pandemic, we continue to ensure that essential principles regarding the processing of personal data are respected. Finally, we must always act unbiasedly in accordance with our missions, in case of any potential deviations.