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In reply please  
refer to:

Your reference:

17 January 2022

Dear Co-signatories,

I thank you for your joint letter of 29 November 2021 expressing concern and requesting a global response regarding collaboration with Africa on COVID-19 following the Omicron outbreak.

Your letter raises the critical issues of vaccine inequity and the need for global solidarity, of which I strongly agree and have been urging since the onset of the pandemic, and which the World Health Organization (WHO) and our COVAX partners are working tirelessly to address.

WHO and partners established the Access to Covid-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A) in April 2020 to mitigate inequity, to help accelerate not only development but equitable access to COVID-19 tools globally. WHO recommendations on COVID-19 vaccination have been and will continue to be driven by the principles of equity and fairness.

Vaccine nationalism threatens to prolong the pandemic. The emergence of variants, such as Omicron, reinforces this reality. Going beyond the moral imperative, WHO continues to advocate for global solidarity, arguing that there are health and economic benefits from countries working in a coordinated manner to end this pandemic, everywhere.

Recognizing that only 1% of vaccine production is currently located on the African continent, we understand the urgent need to greatly expand this capacity, not only for the current pandemic response but to strengthen regional health security to better respond in the future.

The COVAX Manufacturing Taskforce is working to address this through a number of impact-driven workstreams. In particular, the Long-term Sustainable Manufacturing workstream is focused on expanding capacities of existing manufacturers in low- and middle-income countries, and establishing sustainable capacity in regions where no such capacity yet exists.

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cc: His Excellency Mr Josep Borrell Fontelles, Vice President of the European Commission, Brussels

The mRNA Technology Transfer Hub, established in South Africa in July 2021 by WHO and our partners, aims to increase access to mRNA vaccines on the continent by establishing manufacturing capacity using a technology transfer hub model to ensure sustainable vaccine security in future pandemics.

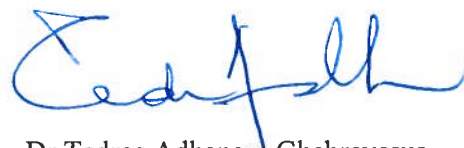
At the same time, COVAX is working tirelessly to secure supply and deliver doses to all participants at risk of not meeting the global vaccination targets. By the end of 2021, COVAX had shipped over 900 million doses, including 279 million doses to African countries, approximately ~30% of its overall shipments. In the last 3 months, shipments to Africa have increased considerably, and will continue to do so in 2022.

WHO and other COVAX partners have been working with Ministries of Health to develop and implement national vaccination deployment plans, including providing technical assistance and support for regulatory authorization for vaccines, tools and trainings for healthcare workers, strengthening adverse event surveillance and monitoring systems, cold chain planning and deployment, enhancing data systems including electronic vaccine records, support for vaccine demand, and crisis and risk communications advice.

WHO along with UNICEF and Gavi have recently launched the COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery Facility, whose aim is to intensify the operational support to countries whose rate of vaccination is not at a point that will achieve global coverage targets. We are working to support country governments to unblock all bottlenecks that are constraining turning vaccines into vaccinations. This is an ongoing effort, one toward which all partners are needed and encouraged to join.

I assure you that WHO and all partners in COVAX and the ACT Accelerator remain firmly committed to the fair and equitable provision of COVID-19 vaccines and the other tools which are critical to ending this pandemic. I am sparing no effort in pushing for a substantial and urgent increase in vaccine supply for the countries that need them the most.

Yours faithfully,



Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus  
Director-General