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-PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT-

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

High-level Meeting on “A Vaccine for All”

16 April 2021

A Special Ministerial Meeting of the Economic and Social Council was convened on “A Vaccine for All” on 16 April 2021 to explore ways to ensure equitable access to the COVID-19 vaccine. I am pleased to share the key messages and recommendations that emerged from our discussions:

- The COVID-19 pandemic continues to wreak havoc around the world and has reversed decades of progress in development. It has revealed and exacerbated the existing social and economic vulnerabilities and systemic inequalities in the global economic system.
- The rapid development of effective vaccines demonstrated the power of science and innovation and collaboration between governments and the private sector.
- However, the inequality in access to vaccines is staggering. Of the total 832 million doses administered globally, 82% have gone to the high or upper middle-income countries, while low-income countries have just received just 0.2%.
- While science has succeeded, solidarity is failing.
- Vaccines for COVID-19 should be considered a global public good. Universal access to safe, early, effective, and affordable, vaccines is the only way to end the pandemic, support economic recovery and realize the Sustainable Development Goals. Without universal vaccination, the virus could roam, mutate, and return. No one is safe until everyone is safe.
- We need to drastically accelerate efforts to ensure equitable access to the vaccine. This requires scaling up vaccine production, supply and distribution.
- The Political Declaration on Equitable Global Access to COVID-19 Vaccines, endorsed by over 180 countries, was considered an important step towards vaccine equity.
- The expressed commitment to global solidarity and multilateral cooperation must now be translated into concrete actions, which requires political will, particularly from the rich and advanced countries.

Universal and Equitable Access:

- Lessons must be learned from previous pandemics, such as HIV/AIDS and Ebola, where market forces hindered equitable distribution of the vaccine. We need decisive actions with not only national plans but also a global plan on “vaccines for all”.
- The work of WHO has been and will remain primary. The COVAX facility and the ACT accelerator should be fully funded. Commitments and contracts that have been made with COVAX must be fulfilled. Excess stocks of vaccines, held by some countries, should be immediately released. Export restrictions

and other displays of vaccine nationalism that restrict or slow the availability of COVID-19 vaccines, ingredients, medicine and supplies must be ended.

- Bilateral agreements are limiting access to the vaccine to a few countries, undermining the vaccine supply and leading to inefficient demand signals for private companies and manufacturers. It is also important to diversify supply chains, update regulatory frameworks and improve quality control.

Ramping Up Production:

- Cooperation is needed to massively expand manufacturing capacity globally, and especially in low and middle-income countries. Investment in production facilities in the developing countries can help achieve the required levels of production of the vaccines.
- To this end, sharing of technology and information for the detection, prevention, treatment and control of the pandemic and for vaccine production is essential. Restrictions arising from intellectual property rights need to be eased to allow manufacturing in developing countries. A large number of developing countries favour temporarily waiving obligations under the TRIPS Agreement. Some countries, however, want to continue to incentivize innovation, research, and development.
- Besides the use of TRIPS flexibilities and the waiver of certain intellectual property provisions, options to help increase production include voluntary licences, technology pools and platforms, The COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP) could serve as a voluntary mechanism for sharing intellectual property, knowledge and data.
- A framework agreement on trade and health, preferably before the WTO's Twelfth Ministerial Conference in early December, could provide developing countries access to vaccines and other critical health goods, whilst preserving the incentives needed for innovation and investment in research and development.
- There were also clear calls on the private sector to share know-how and intellectual property with qualified manufacturers, particularly in developing countries.
- Country-led solutions should be encouraged and promoted. Africa and other regions need to leapfrog into local vaccine production, building on the success of novel vaccine technologies. The proposed African Medicines Agency was considered key for building regional regulatory capacity. The new African Union Partnership for African Vaccine Manufacturing, which envisages reducing imported vaccines to less than 40% by 2040, was welcomed.

Meeting the Financing Gap and Building Back Better:

- Adequate financing and capacity-building are needed to ensure that developing countries are prepared to vaccinate their most vulnerable populations, including women, children and youth, elderly persons, people with disabilities, health care workers and teachers.
- We should seize the opportunity to strengthen health systems and advance towards universal health coverage. This will also enable countries to be better prepared and become more resilient against future pandemics. We should also continue to maintain routine vaccinations for other immunizations and sustain the prevention and treatment for other medical conditions.
- Finances required to achieve universal COVID-19 vaccination are a fraction of the estimated economic losses if we do not defeat the virus.

- Additional development finance is needed to ensure that support is not diverted from other areas critical for progress towards the SDGs.
- Education, training, and reliable communication is needed to build trust in vaccines. Addressing misinformation and disinformation is critical for building trust in institutions and to increase vaccine uptake and discourage vaccine hesitancy.
- ECOSOC Special Meeting outlined the path towards a coordinated global effort to ensure equitable access to the vaccine, based on the principles of solidarity, equity and sharing.

Key announcement and proposals were made during the meeting:

- WHO and partners recently established the COVAX Manufacturing Taskforce to find ways to increase supply in the short term and to build a platform for sustainable vaccine manufacturing to support regional health security.
- WHO is calling for expressions of interest to establish technology transfer hubs to assist countries acquire vaccine technology and know-how as rapidly as possible.
- A new Partnership for African Vaccine Manufacturing will be formed by the African Union with the aim of establishing at least five vaccine production hubs in Africa, potentially starting with three mRNA vaccine production facilities in Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa.
- The EU is developing a joint EU mechanism for sharing vaccine doses with other countries, including developing countries, preferably via COVAX. The EU will also provide around €100 million in humanitarian support to the COVID-19 vaccination campaigns in Africa, in cooperation with the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.
- China has provided vaccine aid to 80 developing countries and donated vaccines to UN peacekeepers. China also announced a plan to provide 10 million vaccine doses, with a priority given to developing countries.
- The Russian Federation launched a campaign to vaccinate diplomatic staff of foreign embassies in Moscow and made voluntary contributions to a number of UN agencies.
- The United States announced the launch of an “Investment Opportunity for COVAX” for GAVI’s [COVAX Advance Market Commitment \(AMC\)](#) to leverage our contributions to accelerate global COVID-19 vaccinations and end the pandemic. The United States also expressed its commitment to providing another \$2 billion to the COVAX facility through 2022.
- CARICOM called for a Global Summit to urgently address equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, particularly for developing countries.
- Italy (current G20 Chair), together with the European Commission, will convene a Global Health Summit on 21 May 2021, which aims to adopt a set of principles to guide the international community in pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.
- The United States and several partners are planning a UN virtual dialogue that convenes key opinion leaders and high-level officials to explore ways to strengthen global health security financing on 26 April.

As President of ECOSOC, I commit to continuing this important dialogue on vaccine equity throughout the Segments and Forums of the Council.