Press Release:

2.2 million COVID-19 vaccines allocated by the COVAX Facility arrive in Ethiopia, marking the start of the country’s COVID-19 vaccination campaign

Addis Ababa, 07 March 2021 – Today, Ethiopia has received 2.184 million doses of the Astra Zeneca COVID-19 vaccine via the COVAX Facility. This is a historic step towards our goal to ensure equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines globally, in what will be the largest vaccine procurement and supply operation in history. This delivery is part of the first wave of arrivals of the COVID-19 vaccines in Ethiopia that will continue in the coming weeks.

The Astra Zeneca vaccines licensed and manufactured by Serum Institute of India (SII), were delivered by Ethiopian Airlines at Bole International Airport this morning. On hand to receive the shipment were Honourable Dr Lia Tadesse, Minister of Health, Ms Yasmin Wohabrebbi, State Minister of Finance and Economic Cooperation, the WHO Representative Dr Boureima Hama Sambo, UNICEF Representative Ms Adele Khodr and development partners.

“We’re very pleased that Ethiopia is receiving its first COVAX vaccine doses,” said Charlie Whetham, Regional Head, Asia Pacific and Anglophone Africa at Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. “Thanks to the work of the Government of Ethiopia and of the COVAX partners, and with the support of our donors, we’re delivering on our promise to begin vaccinating vulnerable populations around the world.”

“The arrival of the vaccines in Addis Ababa is a major milestone, a turn of the tides for the better, in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, thanks to the coordinated global action for equitable vaccine distribution,” Dr Boureima Hama Sambo, WHO Representative in Ethiopia, said. “WHO will continue to work with the Government of Ethiopia and global partners to ensure that Ethiopia receives, deploys and administers adequate quantities of COVID-19 vaccines to the Ethiopian people, because as WHO has repeatedly said, no one is safe until everyone is safe.”
This is among the first shipments to countries in the WHO African Region by the COVAX Facility in its unprecedented effort to deliver at least 2 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines by the end of 2021.

“With these vaccines, we move a step closer to normalizing life for the millions of children and their families that have been impacted by this pandemic in ways never seen in living memory,” said UNICEF Representative Adele Khodr. “We will work with the Government of Ethiopia and partners to ensure that everyone earmarked for vaccination is reached and that no deserving individual is left behind.”

This shipment contains 2,184,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccines. It is the first of several shipments that will be delivered to Ethiopia in accordance with global vaccine availability and the Ethiopia National Deployment and Vaccination Plan (NDVP). Vaccinations will commence in the next few days for the first phase priority groups.

Honorable Health Minister, Dr Lia Tadesse, expressed the Ethiopian Government’s appreciation of the COVAX Facility, vaccine manufacturers and global development partners. “What seemed unattainable a few months ago is now in our hands and, with it, the assurance of protecting our people, and a hope that we can beat the pandemic through cascaded and equitable vaccination of the population alongside other public health measures,” she said. “Ethiopia is proud to have contributed to this global effort representing the African Region.”

The vaccines were produced within a year of the WHO Director-General’s declaration of the novel coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC). This is the first time in history that vaccines were produced in such a short time, a result of the tremendous efforts in vaccine research, development and manufacture. The arrival of the vaccines in Ethiopia was made possible through the COVAX Facility with the generous support of partners that spared no efforts or resources to ensure the timely and equitable distribution of vaccines across the globe.

COVAX is part of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, a ground-breaking global collaboration to accelerate development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines.

For several months, COVAX partners have been supporting governments in readiness efforts, in preparation for COVID-19 vaccination deployment. They have been especially active in working with countries like Ethiopia so they can benefit from the Advance Market Commitment (AMC), an innovative financial mechanism to help secure global and equitable access for COVID-19 vaccines. COVAX partners supported with the development of national vaccination plans and strengthening of cold chain capacities.
COVAX is co-led by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the World health Organization (WHO) and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), working in partnership with UNICEF as well as the World Bank, civil society organisations, manufacturers, and development partners. COVAX is part of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, a ground-breaking global collaboration to accelerate development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines.

COVAX has built a diverse portfolio of vaccines suitable for a range of settings and populations, and is on track to meet its goal of delivering at least 2 billion doses of vaccine to participating countries around the globe in 2021, including at least 1.3 billion donor-funded doses to the 92 lower-income COVAX Facility participants supported by the Gavi COVAX AMC.

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Notes to Editors

List of donor pledges to the Gavi COVAX AMC is available [here](#).
Interactive funding tracker for the ACT Accelerator, which includes details of funding for COVAX, can be found here.

About COVAX

COVAX, the vaccines pillar of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, is co-led by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance Gavi) and the World Health Organization (WHO) – working in partnership with developing and developing country vaccine manufacturers, UNICEF, the World Bank, and others. It is the only global initiative that is working with governments and manufacturers to ensure COVID-19 vaccines are available worldwide to both higher-income and lower-income countries.

CEPI is focused on the COVAX vaccine research and development portfolio: investing in R&D across a variety of promising candidates, with the goal to support development of three safe and effective vaccines which can be made available to countries participating in the COVAX Facility. As part of this work, CEPI has secured first right of refusal to potentially over one billion doses for the COVAX Facility to a number of candidates, and made strategic investments in vaccine manufacturing, which includes reserving capacity to manufacture doses of COVAX vaccines at a network of facilities, and securing glass vials to hold 2 billion doses of vaccine. CEPI is also investing in the ‘next generation’ of vaccine candidates, which will give the world additional options to control COVID-19 in the future.

Gavi is focused on procurement and delivery for COVAX: coordinating the design, implementation and administration of the COVAX Facility and the Gavi COVAX AMC and working with its Alliance partners UNICEF and WHO, along with governments, on country readiness and delivery. The COVAX Facility is the global pooled procurement mechanism for COVID-19 vaccines through which COVAX will ensure fair and equitable access to vaccines for all 190 participating economies, using an allocation framework formulated by WHO. The COVAX Facility will do this by pooling buying power from participating economies and providing volume guarantees across a range of promising vaccine candidates. The Gavi COVAX AMC is the financing mechanism that will support the participation of 92 low- and middle-income countries in the Facility, enabling access to donor-funded doses of safe and effective vaccines. Gavi is fundraising for the COVAX AMC, and funding UNICEF procurement of vaccines as well as partners’ and governments work on readiness and delivery, including support cold chain equipment, technical assistance, syringes, vehicles, and other aspects of the vastly complex logistical operation for delivery. UNICEF and the Pan-American Health
Organisation (PAHO) will be acting as procurement coordinators for the COVAX Facility, helping deliver vaccines to COVAX AMC participants and others.

WHO has multiple roles within COVAX: It provides normative guidance on vaccine policy, regulation, safety, R&D, allocation, and country readiness and delivery. Its Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on Immunization develops evidence-based immunization policy recommendations. Its Emergency Use Listing (EUL)/prequalification programmes ensure harmonized review and authorization across member states. It provides global coordination and member state support on vaccine safety monitoring. It developed the target product profiles for COVID-19 vaccines and provides R&D technical coordination. WHO leads, along with UNICEF, the support to countries as they prepare to receive and administer vaccines. The Country Readiness and Delivery (CRD) workstream includes Gavi and numerous other partners working at the global, regional, and country-level to provide tools, guidance, monitoring, and on the ground technical assistance for the planning and roll-out of the vaccines. Along with COVAX partners, WHO is also developing a no-fault compensation scheme as part of the time-limited indemnification and liability commitments.

UNICEF is leveraging its experience as the largest single vaccine buyer in the world and working with manufacturers and partners on the procurement of COVID-19 vaccine doses, as well as freight, logistics and storage. UNICEF already procures more than 2 billion doses of vaccines annually for routine immunization and outbreak response on behalf of nearly 100 countries. In collaboration with the PAHO Revolving Fund, UNICEF is leading efforts to procure and supply doses of COVID-19 vaccines for COVAX. In addition, UNICEF, Gavi and WHO are working with governments around the clock to ensure that countries are ready to receive the vaccines, with appropriate cold chain equipment in place and health workers trained to dispense them. UNICEF is also playing a lead role in efforts to foster trust in vaccines, delivering vaccine confidence communications and tracking and addressing misinformation around the world.

About CEPI

CEPI is an innovative partnership between public, private, philanthropic, and civil organisations, launched at Davos in 2017, to develop vaccines to stop future epidemics. CEPI has moved with great urgency and in coordination with WHO in response to the emergence of COVID-19. CEPI has initiated ten partnerships to develop vaccines against the novel coronavirus. The programmes are leveraging rapid response platforms already supported by CEPI as well as new partnerships.

Before the emergence of COVID-19, CEPI’s priority diseases included Ebola virus, Lassa virus, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus, Nipah virus, Rift Valley
Fever and Chikungunya virus. CEPI also invested in platform technologies that can be used for rapid vaccine and immunoprophylactic development against unknown pathogens (Disease X).

**About Gavi**

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance is a public-private partnership that helps vaccinate half the world’s children against some of the world’s deadliest diseases. Since its inception in 2000, Gavi has helped to immunise a whole generation – over 822 million children – and prevented more than 14 million deaths, helping to halve child mortality in 73 developing countries. Gavi also plays a key role in improving global health security by supporting health systems as well as funding global stockpiles for Ebola, cholera, meningitis and yellow fever vaccines. After two decades of progress, Gavi is now focused on protecting the next generation and reaching the unvaccinated children still being left behind, employing innovative finance and the latest technology – from drones to biometrics – to save millions more lives, prevent outbreaks before they can spread and help countries on the road to self-sufficiency. Learn more at [www.gavi.org](http://www.gavi.org) and connect with us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com).

The Vaccine Alliance brings together developing country and donor governments, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Bank, the vaccine industry, technical agencies, civil society, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other private sector partners. View the full list of donor governments and other leading organizations that fund Gavi’s work [here](https://gavi.org/).  

**About WHO**

The World Health Organization provides global leadership in public health within the United Nations system. Founded in 1948, WHO works with 194 Member States, across six regions and from more than 150 offices, to promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable. Our goal for 2019-2023 is to ensure that a billion more people have universal health coverage, to protect a billion more people from health emergencies, and provide a further billion people with better health and wellbeing.

For updates on COVID-19 and public health advice to protect yourself from coronavirus, visit [www.who.int](http://www.who.int) and follow WHO on [Twitter](https://twitter.com), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com), [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com), [TikTok](https://www.tiktok.com), [Pinterest](https://www.pinterest.com), [Snapchat](https://www.snapchat.com), [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com)

**About UNICEF**
UNICEF works in some of the world’s toughest places, to reach the world’s most disadvantaged children. Across 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone. For more information about UNICEF and its work for children, visit www.unicef.org. For more information about COVID-19, visit www.unicef.org/coronavirus. Find out more about UNICEF’s work on the COVID-19 vaccines here, or about UNICEF’s work on immunization here.

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About the ACT-Accelerator

The Access to COVID-19 Tools ACT-Accelerator, is a new, ground-breaking global collaboration to accelerate the development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines. It was set up in response to a call from G20 leaders in March and launched by the WHO, European Commission, France and The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in April 2020.

The ACT-Accelerator is not a decision-making body or a new organisation, but works to speed up collaborative efforts among existing organisations to end the pandemic. It is a framework for collaboration that has been designed to bring key players around the table with the goal of ending the pandemic as quickly as possible through the accelerated development, equitable allocation, and scaled up delivery of tests, treatments and vaccines, thereby protecting health systems and restoring societies and economies in the near term. It draws on the experience of leading global health organisations which are tackling the world’s toughest health challenges, and who, by working together, are able to unlock new and more ambitious results against COVID-19. Its members share a commitment to ensure all people have access to all the tools needed to defeat COVID-19 and to work with unprecedented levels of partnership to achieve it.

The ACT-Accelerator has four areas of work: diagnostics, therapeutics, vaccines and the health system connector. Cross-cutting all of these is the workstream on Access & Allocation.