

Baghdad, 12 May 2021 – Despite a continued global shortage and limited production of COVID-19 vaccines, on 9 May Iraq received the second shipment of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine through the COVAX Facility. The arrival of the second shipment of exactly 499 200 doses brings the total number of vaccines received by the Iraqi health authorities from the COVAX Facility to nearly one million.

"The epidemiological situation may have shown a slight improvement but is not yet under control and the number of infections and fatalities remains of great concern in Iraq. Controlling this pandemic is our common goal, and we need to do everything we can to reduce the transmission of the virus and subsequent mortality in Iraq. The more people who get vaccinated the more we move closer to controlling this epidemic in Iraq and the pandemic around the world," said Dr Ahmed Zouiten WHO Representative in Iraq.

As of 10 May, a total of 441 121 people have already received the vaccine in different governorates of Iraq, with an average of 15 000 people being vaccinated every day. "We need to fast track procurement of more vaccines to ensure that at least 20% of the eligible population is vaccinated by the end of 2021," Dr Zouiten added.

The high rate of COVID-19 infection in Iraq continues to put enormous pressure on hospitals, intensive care units, health workers, and national resources. While preventive measures can effectively reduce transmission, their effectiveness still always depends on citizens' adherence to these measures. This makes vaccination a top nationwide goal to win the battle against the epidemic.

Since the start of the pandemic and as of 10 May, Iraq reported a total of 1 117 627 confirmed cases of COVID-19 infection, and 15 800 related deaths, and has experienced 2 distinct waves of high levels of transmission, the last of which started in late January 2021 and is still ongoing with an average of 4000 to 5000 cases being reported every day for the last few weeks.

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## **Notes to editors**

COVAX is a partnership between CEPI, Gavi - the Vaccine Alliance, UNICEF and WHO.

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