



DAMASCUS, 22 April 2021 – 203 000 doses of the Astra Zeneca vaccine from the Serum Institute of India arrived in Damascus today through the COVAX Facility. This first batch of the vaccines will be allocated to frontline health workers, including health workers in northeast Syria. Simultaneously, a separate batch of 53 800 doses of Astra Zeneca vaccines for the high-risk populations in northwest Syria is also shipped through WHO and UNICEF offices in Gaziantep.

Under the COVAX Facility, Syria is one of the 92 countries eligible for advance market distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. In coordination with GAVI - the Vaccine Alliance, WHO and UNICEF are providing detailed technical support to the national health authority in Syria to launch the national vaccination campaign later this month.

“This is an important milestone in our collective fight against the pandemic. Delivery of the COVID-19 vaccines by COVAX and partners brings us closer to vaccine equity and gives hope for the people in Syria, whose lives have been shattered by a decade of conflict and the devastating impact of the pandemic. With the vaccines delivered through this first batch and with future deliveries planned for this year we hope that by end of 2021, health workers, the elderly and people with chronic diseases – that is 20% of the population – will be protected from COVID-19 and its complications,” said Dr Akjemal Magtymova, Head of Mission and WHO Representative in Syria. “National partners, the Serum Institute of India, GAVI, UNICEF and WHO have put all the efforts to bring COVID-19 vaccines to Syria, and we are grateful for this partnership and its tangible results.”

“This is a great day of hope. The imminent roll-out of the vaccines will bring protection to health workers, who continue their lifesaving work amid the pandemic. Every health worker who will

get vaccinated will be better protected to attend to children's and families' health needs who have endured the impact of this pandemic in many forms," said Bo Viktor Nylund, UNICEF Representative in Syria. "We are particularly grateful to the Government of India for facilitating the delivery of this urgently needed consignment of the COVID-19 vaccines. We continue to urge wealthier nations to continue working with WHO, UNICEF and COVAX to get vaccines as soon as possible to vulnerable communities in conflict-ravaged countries like Syria. No one is safe until everyone is safe."

"Today is a historic day for Syria and its fight against COVID-19," said Dr Tarek Elshimi, Gavi Senior Country Manager for Syria. "This delivery is the result of an unprecedented global partnership to ensure no country is forced to go without COVID-19 vaccines and represents a vital effort in tackling this pandemic."

WHO, UNICEF and health partners on the ground are committed to ensure equitable distribution of vaccines to the target groups in Syria and support the upcoming vaccination campaign.

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 organizations, manufacturers, and others. 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.

Notes to Editors

COVAX is a partnership between CEPI, Gavi, UNICEF and WHO.

[Full COVAX news note to editors](#)

[List of donor pledges to the Gavi COVAX AMC](#)

[Funding tracker for the ACT Accelerator, which includes details of funding for COVAX](#)

[Live updates on the COVAX vaccine roll-out globally](#)

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[Statement by Dr Akjemal Magtymova, WHO Representative, on the arrival of COVID-19 vaccines at the Ministry of Health in Syria on 21 April 2021](#)

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