Syria, as one of the 92 countries eligible for COVID-19 vaccines under the COVAX Facility's Advanced Market Commitment, stands ready to receive the first batch of the Astra Zeneca vaccine produced by the Serum Institute in India (AZ SII). This first batch is dedicated for 3% of the population and targets high-risk groups, prioritizing health workers and people over 55 years of age with co-morbidities.

Cairo, 31 March 2021 –

Under the COVAX Facility, in the first phase of COVID-19 vaccination, Syria is expected to receive 912 000 doses of the vaccine, including for northeast Syria, which accounts for 11% of the total Syrian population. An additional 224 000 doses of the vaccine will be allocated to northwest Syria.

"Allocation of the vaccines and its distribution across Syria is planned based on the latest population estimates by the UN OCHA Population Task Force. Our target is to vaccinate 20% of the population by the end of 2021, in addition to the health workers who will be vaccinated in the first phase of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign, and the elderly, people with co-morbidities, schoolteachers and other essential workers in the second phase," said Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO's Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean.

Hospitals and public health care centres will be used as service delivery points to provide vaccinations, along with mobile teams all over the country. Services will be provided by trained hospital teams and routine immunization personnel. Implementation across northeast (including camps and non-formal settlements) and northwest Syria will follow the current experiences of the Expanded Programme on Immunization through fixed facilities (hospitals and primary health care centres) and mobile teams.

After COVID-19 vaccine introduction, 200 independent monitors will be deployed by WHO and UNICEF in all governorates to evaluate the performance of the teams and the vaccination coverage rates.

It should be noted that Syria was expecting the vaccines in April this year. Regretfully, the production of AZ SII vaccines was insufficient to meet the global demand resulting in delays in making COVID-19 vaccine available in Syria. WHO together with its partners continues combating the spread of COVID-19 in Syria and making all possible efforts to secure vaccines.

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