**Second Shipment of COVID-19 Vaccines from COVAX Arrives in Armenia**

*50,400 additional doses of COVID-19 vaccine, supplied by the COVAX Facility via UNICEF, will help speed up the national vaccination programme*

**YEREVAN, 17 May 2021** - The Ministry of Health of Armenia welcomed the arrival of a critical second batch of COVID-19 vaccine doses this morning through the COVAX Facility (CEPI, GAVI, UNICEF, WHO), with logistical support from UNICEF. The 50,400 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine against COVID-19 will help to speed up the national vaccination programme in Armenia as well as provide second doses for those who have already received a first course of AstraZeneca.

“To support vaccine deployment in Armenia, UNICEF leveraged its experience as the largest single vaccine buyer in the world to procure and deliver COVID-19 vaccine doses on behalf of COVAX Facility,” said Mr Yuri Oksamitniy, UNICEF Representative in Armenia. “In addition, UNICEF works with the Ministry of Health to ensure that the country is ready to receive the vaccines by providing training for health workers to dispense them and through fostering trust in vaccines. UNICEF and the Ministry will also work together to ensure that appropriate cold-chain equipment is in place throughout Armenia.”

“One of WHO’s highest priorities as a co-leader of COVAX, is to ensure the quality, safety and efficacy of these COVID-19 vaccines. Within the joint initiative with the EU, we are committed to support the country with revision, development and adaptation of the vaccination guidelines for primary health care specialists. Through our technical assistance training and supervision, regional hubs are planned to be established with the goal to initiate educational sessions for all relevant staff in support of the National Immunization Programme in Armenia,” stated Egor Zaitsev, WHO Representative in Armenia.

“The Team Europe is committed to ensuring that everyone in Armenia who needs a vaccine gets it, anywhere across the country. Under COVAX, the Team Europe is once again supporting the Government of Armenia vaccination roll-out goals in close partnership with WHO and UNICEF. Vaccines work, vaccines save lives,” noted Andrea Wiktorin, the Ambassador of the European Union to Armenia.

“With the world still struggling to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, increasing supply of vaccines has brought us much needed hope for saving lives and getting back to a more normal life. Equitable access to safe and effective vaccines, along with other measures, promises to help keep people healthy, economies open and end the pandemic. Thanks to international solidarity via the COVAX Facility, vaccines are now reaching all countries in need. We are pleased that Armenia is among those that have already received a second batch and that the Ministry of Health is now providing everyone in the country with free and easy access,” said the UN RC in Armenia, Shombi Sharp.

Vaccination for COVID-19 is voluntary in Armenia and available for persons above the age of 18.

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COVAX is co-led by the Coalition for Innovations in Epidemic Preparedness (CEPI), the Gavi Alliance, UNICEF and WHO. It aims to provide at least 2 billion doses of vaccines that have received the WHO Emergency Use Authorization (EUL) by the end of 2021. 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. COVAX is supported by contributions from a range of government and international development partners, including the United states, Germany, United Kingdom, the European Union, Japan, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and others.

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