

Media Update

23 February 2021

United Nations

Secretary-General's Remarks

Secretary-General's Message to the Opening of the 46th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council - as delivered

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2021-02-22/secretary-generals-message-the-opening-of-the-46th-regular-session-of-the-human-rights-council-delivered-scroll-down-for-all-english-and-french>

UNICEF

PRESS RELEASE

UNICEF begins shipping syringes for the global rollout of COVID-19 vaccines under COVAX

100,000 syringes will arrive in Maldives, with more countries to receive imminent deliveries for rollout of COVAX Facility vaccines

NEW YORK, 23 February 2021 – UNICEF has sent 100,000 syringes and 1,000 safety boxes for COVID-19 vaccinations to the Maldives by air freight from UNICEF's humanitarian warehouse in Dubai—part of the first wave of COVID-19-related syringe shipments to begin rolling out in the coming days. Others in the first wave of shipments include Côte d'Ivoire and São Tomé and Príncipe.

The 0.5 ml syringes and safety boxes are expected to arrive in Malé, Maldives on Tuesday. Over the next few weeks, UNICEF will ship more than 14.5 million 0.5 ml and 0.3 ml auto-disable syringes to more than 30 countries. While the 0.5 ml syringes are meant for use with the Serum Institute of India/AstraZeneca vaccine, the 0.3 ml ones are to be used with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

“In this global fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, syringes are as vital as the vaccine itself,” said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore. “It is critical to have adequate supplies of syringes already in place in every country before the vaccine arrives so that the vaccine can be administered safely. This would allow immunization to start immediately and help turn the tide on this terrible virus.”

The countries that will receive syringes in this initial tranche are from those included in the [COVAX indicative distribution](#) and that have put in requests to UNICEF to supply syringes. These shipments will support the country rollout of COVID-19 vaccines, and is part of work by the [COVAX Facility](#) to provide vaccines to all participating countries.

The 0.5 ml syringes are being dispatched from UNICEF’s humanitarian warehouse in Dubai, while the 0.3 ml & 2 ml syringes will be transported directly from a manufacturer in Spain. The consignments will also include safety boxes for the safe disposal of syringes.

Both syringes are of the auto-disable type, which means they cannot be used again after a single dose of vaccine has been administered. This reduces the risk of infection from blood-borne diseases as a result of syringe re-use.

In all, UNICEF will be supplying up to 1 billion syringes and 10 million safety boxes to countries in 2021 to ensure they are ready for COVID-19 vaccinations. In order to meet the demand for these vital supplies, [UNICEF created a stockpile](#) of almost half a billion syringes in its warehouses in Copenhagen and Dubai in preparation for the broader rollout of COVID-19 vaccines in 82 low- and lower middle-income countries.

UNICEF has been working with airlines, logistics operators and freight forwarders to ensure the syringes are treated as priority freight, whether they are being shipped direct from a manufacturer or from UNICEF warehouses to the destination country’s port of entry. Although the first deliveries will be transported by air, most of the syringes and safety boxes will be transported by sea due to the large amount of space they take up as cargo.

UNICEF is aiming to make 2 billion COVID-19 doses available for delivery in 2021. Even before COVID-19, UNICEF was already the largest single vaccine buyer in the world, procuring over 2 billion vaccines annually in order to reach almost half of the world's children under 5. In addition, the agency procures and supplies around 600-800 million syringes for regular immunization programmes annually.

COVAX is a global collaboration co-led by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and WHO, and includes UNICEF, which leads on procurement and delivery, as well as getting countries ready to receive vaccines.

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Notes to editors:

Download [photos and broll here](#), including special syringe broll from the warehouse in Dubai, and en route from Dubai to the Maldives.

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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