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# The World Bank and the African Union's COVID-19 Africa Vaccine Acquisition Task Team (AVATT) agree to work together to deploy vaccines for 400million Africans



## African Vaccine Acquisition Task Team (AVATT)



**14 June 2021** – The President of the World Bank, Mr David Malpass, and his senior management team comprised of Dr Axel van Trotsenburg and Dr Makhtar Diop met with the African Union's COVID-19 Vaccine Acquisition Task Team (AVATT) to discuss modalities for a partnership that will accelerate vaccine deployment to Africa.

In a historic COVID-19 vaccine procurement agreement signed on 28 March 2021, the AVATT had previously successfully secured up to 400 million doses of the Johnson and Johnson single-shot COVID-19 vaccine with the support of the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank). "In providing a US\$2billion guarantee on behalf of the African Union member states, we were able to help put Africa in a strong negotiating position with producers

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It was obvious to us at

AVATT that no deal will have been possible without a strong financial backing" the President of Afreximbank, Prof Benedict Oramah said.

"The Johnson and Johnson doses are a critical step towards the continental goal of vaccinating at least 60 per cent of Africans. Reaching this target is a prerequisite to saving African lives and livelihoods, safely reopening our economies and resuming our economic development agenda." said Dr John N Nkengasong, Director of the African Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) and Member of the AVATT.

With over 41 countries at different stages of finalising their orders for purchasing the vaccine and with vaccination momentum growing, it is essential that countries feel they can get sufficient doses quickly and in an affordable way.

The World Bank's decision to partner with AVATT on the heels of the US announcement about dose sharing means countries can be assured they can both access and finance the vaccines they need, " said Mr Strive Masiyiwa, African Union Special Envoy and coordinator of the AVATT.

Under the AVATT structure, AU Member States are allocated vaccines according to the size of their populations for purchase through a pooled procurement mechanism. These vaccines complement the vaccines offered through the COVAX Facility, which has set out to deliver vaccines for up to 30 per cent of participating countries' populations, to enable the AU Member States to reach the continental target.

His Excellency President Cyril Ramaphosa of the Republic of South Africa, in his capacity as Chair of the African Union, established the AVATT on 6 November 2020 and mandated it to ensure equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for AU Member States and provide the required financing.

The World Bank team and the AVATT team agreed to fast track all administrative procedures in order to ensure vaccines get into countries as early as possible.

Once the vaccines arrive in the Member States, additional efforts will be required to support their deployment. This includes in-country distribution (logistics and storage in line with the cold-chain requirements), securing the required systems, capacities and capabilities for vaccination. It also includes targeted research and campaigns to identify and address vaccine hesitancy through clear and targeted risk communication and community engagement. These activities will require a significant lift by countries; the additional support is going to be critical.

Looking ahead, Ms. Vera Songwe, United Nations Under Secretary General and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic for Africa (ECA) recalled that the pandemic served to expose vulnerabilities already existing in Africa's health systems which were well document in the ECA's Health and Economic Growth in Africa (HEGA) report in 2019. In Continental Free Trade

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Area (AfcFTA) now provides the platform for building a resilient and inclusive health system, with local production of vaccines, medicines and medical equipment on the continent.

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