

OACPS SG urges greater cooperation at the international level to facilitate equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines

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STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN AND PACIFIC STATES, H.E. MR GEORGES REBELO PINTO CHIKOTI ON WORLD IMMUNISATION WEEK

Brussels, 30 April 2021/OACPS: For over a year, the entire world has battled an unseen enemy – a virus, which has disrupted lives and livelihoods across the globe. In this, the Members of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) have not been spared. The vulnerable economies and health systems of the Member States have been, and continue to be, tested. Vaccines have however, been developed and are being distributed. As World Immunisation Week draws to a close, Secretary-General, H.E. Georges Rebelo Pinto Chikoti, wholeheartedly supports the very relevant theme of “Vaccines work for all” and urges greater cooperation at the international level to facilitate equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines.

While COVID-19 still dominates the headlines, Secretary-General Chikoti recalls that it is still necessary to improve global vaccination coverage to achieve the ambitious goals set in the Immunization Agenda 2030, which aims for “a world where everyone, everywhere, at every age, fully benefits from vaccines for good health and well-being.”

Secretary-General Chikoti notes also, the recent observation of World Malaria Day, on April 25, with the theme of “Zero Malaria - Draw the Line Against Malaria”, which recognizes the continued efforts needed to tackle malaria, which causes at least one million deaths each year, most of them among young children living in sub-Saharan Africa. This year’s theme points to the fact that every malaria case is preventable, and every malaria death is unacceptable.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has emerged as a major challenge for the effective implementation of existing responses to communicable diseases, such as malaria, causing substantial disruption in health services across the world. Secretary-General Chikoti calls for the continued efforts of the international community to eradicate malaria and that the countries that have won this fight remain vigilant to prevent the return of the disease.

It is therefore important for countries to design emergency national strategies to address the disruptions to routine immunization services, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Reinstating routine immunisation campaigns should go hand in hand with efforts for health systems stabilization and economic recovery.

Secretary-General Chikoti, through his development cooperation partnership with the European Union, pledges to continue to support the strengthening of health systems within the Members of the OACPS to promote the prevention and elimination of communicable diseases, such as malaria, and achieve universal health coverage (UHC).

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