

ZIMBABWE STATEMENT DELIVERED DURING THE SECOND REGULAR SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF UNICEF ON AGENDA ITEM 6 ON THE "UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED THROUGH THE COVID-19 VACCINE DELIVERY PARTNERSHIP": 8 SEPTEMBER 2022

Madame President: H. E. Maritza Chan Valverde

Executive Board Members

The Executive Director: Ms. Catherine Russell

Excellencies

Let me start by thanking the President, for the excellent manner in which you have presided over the Session. Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate you on your appointment and taking up this onerous responsibility. I would, also, like to thank the Secretariat for the update on progress achieved through the COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery Partnership.

We are concerned about the persistent lack of equity, in spite of the lessons that we were supposed to have learnt from the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. The continued low vaccination percentages in the global south, in contrast to the over 75 per cent in the global north, is indicative that we still have a long way to go to ensure global herd immunity.

It is, also, regrettable that one of the noble initiatives to address inequality, the COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery Partnership (CoVDP), is underfunded. We are worried that, with the passage of time, the state of underfunding will worsen, on the assumption that we are over the COVID-19 pandemic. While the talk about post COVID-19 recovery is important, it should not preclude us from recognizing that not all the countries have crossed the rubicon or turned the corner.

Madam President

Even though the worst of the pandemic appears to be over, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are still, and will continue to be felt. The ever-present high probability of future pandemics and or variants, which may be more devastating, is worrisome. This should compel us to work together, as no one is safe unless everyone is safe.

My delegation believes that UNICEF is uniquely positioned to play a key role in supporting Member States, especially developing countries, in strengthening their health systems to be more resilient, and to cope with future global shocks and challenges. Special attention should be paid to countries with humanitarian emergencies. In that regard, my delegation appreciates the call to support the integration of COVID-19 vaccination with primary health care, to ensure efficient use of resources.

Inevitably, to increase vaccination coverage rates in developing countries, UNICEF should continue to assist Member States in addressing the causes of the low vaccine uptake, such as vaccine hesitance, access constraints, and other logistical and operational challenges.

In conclusion, let me take this opportunity to thank UNICEF for its efforts in supporting Member States responses to the pandemic, and in all its efforts to address inequalities in vaccination programmes. It is our hope that such collaborative endeavours will be replicated in other areas of UNICEF's work for children. Zimbabwe is ready and willing to partner UNICEF in that endeavour.

I thank you