

U.S. Remarks at UNICEF First Regular Session 2023

Agenda Item 6b: UNICEF Humanitarian Action; COVID-19 Vaccination and Vaccine Delivery Partnership

- The United States applauds the progress in expanding COVID-19 vaccination coverage in collaboration with many partners, and through the support of the COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery Partnership (CoVDP).
- We appreciate the partnership's rapid deployment of political engagement, funding, and technical support, and we thank UNICEF for its leadership and assistance to countries to accelerate COVID-19 vaccine coverage among high priority groups.
- Through the COVID-19 Global Action Plan, and the U.S. Global Vaccine Access (Global VAX) initiative the United States continues to drive coordination and efficiencies, ensure alignment of efforts to accelerate vaccine coverage. In January 2022, only four of the 11 Global VAX surge countries had COVID-19 vaccination coverage over 10 percent. As of January 18, 2023, nine have surpassed 25 percent.
- Steadfast government leadership was key to progress, including in countries affected by humanitarian crises that expanded vaccination while dealing with major emergencies. However, efforts to advance access to safe and effective vaccines in humanitarian settings remains a critical challenge that we must continue to address both in the context of this COVID-19 pandemic response, and for future pandemic preparedness and response efforts.
- We urge UNICEF and all CoVDP partners to prioritize efforts which mitigate disruptions and declines in routine childhood immunizations. These vaccine declines are resulting in outbreaks of polio, measles, and other vaccine preventable diseases.
- We appreciate the technical and operational guidance issued by UNICEF and WHO for effectively integrating COVID-19 vaccination with routine immunization, primary health care services, HIV clinics, and other health services for older adults.
- Recognizing that COVID-19 primary dose coverage among high priority groups remains suboptimal in many countries, we urge CoVDP to include both primary doses and boosters in integration efforts.
- Integration should align with and contribute to efforts to catch up on missed vaccinations, strengthen routine and life-course vaccination, and strengthen primary health care.
- This requires country leadership and enabling policies to ensure that all health workers are also vaccinated and adequately paid, equipped, and protected.
- We appreciate that CoVDP is developing a transition roadmap and urge UNICEF to check that the plan includes clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all involved partners.
- Attention should also be focused on ensuring the smooth transfer of COVAX procurement capabilities into UNICEF's and other CoVDP partner's operations and developing guidance to ensure countries continued equitable and timely access to vaccines and boosters.

- Finally, we strongly support building on CoVDP's effective coordination processes, and request regular updates from UNICEF on its cooperation with CoVDP members. Over the coming months, engagement with all countries is key to maintaining COVID-19 vaccination, as we transition from the pandemic's acute phase to recovery, and build primary health care capacities to prevent, detect, and respond to future health threats.