5 November 2015, Copenhagen – International efforts to end persistent gaps in vaccine access dominated concerns during UNICEF’s annual consultation with the vaccine industry and global partners. Every year, 1.5 million children die from vaccine-preventable diseases. Routine immunization programmes still miss one child in every five.

Over 70 participants, representing 37 vaccine manufacturers and partners gathered at UNICEF’s procurement and logistics headquarters to discuss the deep-rooted and often interlinked problems that prevent governments from procuring the vaccines needed to reach every child.

Country and regional perspectives confirmed the multiple complexities that many governments face in securing a stable, uninterrupted vaccine supply. Intermittent vaccine stock-outs due to a lengthy procurement process, sub-optimal regulatory systems, high vaccine prices and funds scarcity must be addressed if countries are to sustain robust immunization coverage.

Ageing cold chain equipment in urgent need of maintenance or replacement was commonly cited as a major issue. By 2020, the volume of new vaccines introduced into national immunization programmes will quadruple current cold chain storage requirements. However, UNICEF and WHO vaccine management assessments reveal that most countries fall far short of acceptable immunization supply chain standards.

The ongoing Ebola crisis in West Africa exposed the vulnerability of weak health systems in the face of crisis, and sharply reminded global health partners, suppliers and governments on the need to work collaboratively to ensure that routine immunization programmes remain viable when health systems are under the most extreme pressure.

The range of support that UNICEF is providing government-led efforts includes building capacity in supply chain leadership, workforce expertise, data management systems, enabling access to effective cold chain equipment, and system design.

The annual consultation provided suppliers with an overview of the upcoming vaccine tenders before the end of this year, and continuing into 2016. UNICEF anticipates up to 14 tender opportunities for vaccines for some 20 preventable diseases, including pneumonia and diarrhea – the two biggest killers of children under five. In 2015 and 2016, UNICEF will exceed last year’s vaccine procurement record of USD 1.48 billion.

Please visit http://www.unicef.org/supply/index_82977.html for more information and a complete set of presentations that were given.

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