



# Director-General's opening remarks at One Shared World event

5 May 2021

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Thank you so much my friend Jamie, and my greetings to Seth, Larry, Peggy, Kiran and Aurélia,

Good morning, good afternoon and good evening to everyone, and thank you for having me today.

As you all know, vaccines offer real hope of bringing the pandemic under control.

The development and approval of not one, but several safe and effective vaccines so quickly is an incredible scientific achievement.

But the hard truth is that the world's richest people are benefiting from this achievement, while most of the world's poor are missing out.

So far, more than 1.1 billion doses of vaccine have been administered globally, but more than 80% of those have been administered in high- and upper-middle income countries, while just 0.3% have been administered in low-income countries.

Unfortunately, this is a predictable and preventable situation. Over a year ago, WHO and our partners established the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator, including the COVAX vaccines sharing initiative.

COVAX was designed to share the risks of vaccine development, and to offer a mechanism for pooled procurement and equitable rollout.

But many of the same wealthy countries that expressed support for COVAX were in parallel preordering the same vaccines on which COVAX was relying.

The upshot is that we've shown that COVAX works, but it has

So far, COVAX has shipped more than 53 million doses of vaccine to 121 countries and economies – enough for just 0.5% of their combined population of more than 4 billion people.

The problem is not getting vaccines out of COVAX; the problem is getting them in.

We continue to face severe supply constraints, and we are doing everything we can to find ways of increasing production.

But ultimately, the solution to the vaccine crisis is for the countries and companies that control the global supply to share:

To share financial resources, to fully fund the ACT Accelerator and COVAX;

To share vaccine doses, not bilaterally but through COVAX, which is the most equitable way to distribute vaccines;

And to share technology, know-how and to waive intellectual property rights.

We know that production capacity can be expanded using voluntary licensing platforms like C-TAP – the COVID-19 Technology Access Pool.

Every government has an obligation to protect its own people. In time, there will be enough for everyone.

But for now, the global supply of vaccines is limited, and we have an ethical, epidemiological and economic imperative to deploy vaccines as equitably as possible.

Vaccine nationalism will only prolong the pandemic, the economic turmoil it causes, the restrictions on travel and trade, and increase the chances of a variant emerging that evades vaccines.

The pandemic continues to cost the global economy trillions and trade has contracted faster than in the global financial crisis, with the poorest countries hit hardest.

The World Bank estimates that 300 million jobs have already been lost, with 100 million at risk of slipping into poverty. The crisis has been particularly acute for women, who play a key role in running the small enterprises hardest hit by the downturn.

Least-developed countries and others highly dependent on travel and tourism continue to see demand suppressed by pandemic restrictions.

And vaccine nationalism perpetuates the inequities that lie at the root of so many of the world's problems.

We cannot talk about building back better if we cannot address this crisis now.

Wealthy countries have the means to help their citizens weather the crisis. But many low-income countries are already burdened with debt and declining revenues during the pandemic have only made this worse.

While the shoots of recovery have emerged for some, it remains highly uneven, both among countries and within them.

The fastest way out for all is to end the acute stage of this pandemic as quickly as possible; get supply chains and trade systems moving again; and focus on a fairer and greener recovery.

Let me leave you with three ways in which you can help:

First, if you live in a high- or upper-middle income country, use your voice to call on your government to fund COVAX and to share doses with COVAX.

Second, you can help support COVAX by making your own financial contribution through the Go Give One campaign set up by the WHO Foundation. Go to [GoGiveOne.org](https://www.gogiveone.org) and donate.

And third, remember that although vaccines are a vital tool, they're not the only tool. As long as COVID-19 is a threat anywhere, it's a threat everywhere.

We must all continue to take the everyday precautions to keep ourselves and each other safe.

The pandemic has demonstrated that indeed we do live in one shared world – we share the same DNA, the same planet and the same hopes and dreams.

We face shared threats, which we can only meet with shared solutions.

This virus can't be defeated with a divided world. It can only be defeated if we do it together, through solidarity.

I thank you.

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