

COVID-19

Virtual Press conference

1 February 2021

Speaker key:

FC	Fadela Chaib
TAG	Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
GI	Gianni Infantino
MO	Michael Owen
GR	Graham
SO	Sophie
LA	Laurent
SH	Shalid
ST	Stephanie
MK	Dr Maria Van Kerkhove
MR	Dr Michael Ryan
BI	Bianca
BA	Dr Bruce Aylward
MS	Dr Mariangela Simao
TA	Tamara
JO	John
SS	Dr Soumya Swaminathan
IS	Isabel

00:00:14

FC Hello, all. I am Fadela Chaib, speaking to you from WHO headquarters in Geneva and welcoming you to our global COVID-19 press conference today, Monday 1st February. Today's press conference will include special guests who are joining to discuss the launch of a new campaign by FIFA and WHO in support of

COVID-19 vaccines, treatment and diagnostics. Dr Tedros will introduce our special guests shortly.

We have simultaneous interpretation in the six official UN languages plus Portuguese and Hindi. Let me introduce to you the WHO participants. Present in the room are Dr Tedros, WHO Director-General, Dr Mike Ryan, Executive Director, Health Emergencies, Dr Maria Van Kerkhove, Technical Lead on COVID-19, Dr Mariangela Simao, Assistant Director-General, Access to Medicines and Health Products, Dr Soumya Swaminathan, our Chief Scientist, Dr Bruce Aylward, Special Advisor to the DG and Lead on the ACT Accelerator, Dr Kate O'Brien, Director, Immunisation, Biologicals and Vaccine, and Dr Semira Asma, Assistant Director-General for Data, Analytics and Delivery. Welcome all. Now without further delay I would like to hand over to Dr Tedros for his opening remarks and to introduce our guests. Dr Tedros, you have the floor.

00:01:45

TAG Thank you. Thank you, Fadela, shukran. Good morning, good afternoon and good evening. For the third week in a row the number of new cases of COVID-19 reported globally fell last week. There are still many countries with increasing numbers of cases but at a global level this is encouraging news. It shows this virus can be controlled even with the new variants in circulation and it shows that if we keep going with the same proven public health measures we can prevent infections and save lives.

However we have been here before. Over the past year there have been moments in almost all countries when cases declined and governments opened up too quickly and individuals let down their guard only for the virus to come roaring back. As vaccines are rolled out it's vital that all of us continue to take the precautions to keep ourselves and each other safe. Be a role model.

It's vital that governments enable people to make the right choices whether it's making quarantine easier to adhere to or making workplaces safer. Controlling the spread to the virus saves lives now and saves lives later by reducing the chances of more variants emerging and it helps to ensure vaccines remain effective.

00:03:25

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented demand for high-quality health data. Timely, reliable and actionable data is essential for governments and health providers to make the

best decisions to promote and protect health. The pandemic has pushed even some of the most advanced health information systems around the world to the limit as they try to keep track of COVID-19 on top of other health priorities.

Strengthening health information systems is an important part of WHO's work for detecting and responding rapidly to alerts and outbreaks as well as many other health threats. Today WHO launched the SCORE global report on health data systems and capacity which provides a snapshot of the state of health information systems around the world. This is the first report of its kind, covering 133 country health information systems and about 87% of the world's population.

It assesses countries according to the five aspects of SCORE; survey, count, optimise, review and enable. The report shows that globally four in ten deaths remain unregistered. This highlights the urgent need for investments to strengthen health information systems in all countries to support the COVID-19 response and recovery and progress towards universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals.

00:05:12

This report doesn't only identify the problem; it also offers solutions. The SCORE package is a set of tools that I call on all countries and partners to use to urgently address the data gaps. We can only make progress if we measure progress. We would like to thank all countries who contributed to the report and our partners including Bloomberg Philanthropies for their support.

Strengthening health information systems has been a key part of WHO's transformation process over the past three-and-a-half years. Another key part of that process has been a new approach to partnerships. WHO recognises that we can only achieve ambitious goals by working with organisations who reach audiences we traditionally haven't.

Last year WHO entered a new partnership with FIFA to leverage the enormous power of football to promote health. FIFA has been a strong supporter of global efforts to protect football fans from COVID-19. Last year FIFA contributed US\$10 million to the COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund and conducted several campaigns to raise awareness of how to stay safe from the virus, be physically active and to stop violence against women.

00:06:48

Today I'm honoured to be joined by two of the biggest names in the world of football; Gianni Infantino, the President of FIFA, my good friend, and Michael Owen, one of the most prolific strikers of the past 20 years who won the Ballon D'Or for the world's best player in 2001.

Gianni and Michael have joined us today to support the Act Together campaign to promote equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, treatments and diagnostics as part of a comprehensive approach to controlling the pandemic. Gianni, thank you and welcome once again. You have the floor. Thank you, my brother.

GI Thank you. Thank you very much, dear Tedros, my dear friend; really heartfelt thanks for the opportunity to be here at the WHO today. First and foremost on behalf of FIFA and on behalf of the global football community I would like to express my condolences for all the victims of the coronavirus across the world and I extend my deepest sympathies to the families and friends of those who have lost their lives.

Of course our thoughts are also with all those who are suffering or who have suffered in the last year due to this terrible pandemic.

00:08:31

Health is of course the number one priority for everybody all over the world and we feel at FIFA that it is vitally important that we work and that we act together to defeat COVID-19. FIFA is honoured to support global efforts to protect people from the coronavirus and to end this pandemic.

Fairness and team spirit are key values of our sport. Football's beauty is of course that the sport is open to all people; girls and boys, women and men all over the world. These same key values - fairness and team spirit - are needed for today's great challenge; overcoming COVID-19.

If we act together as a team we can play our part in the fight against coronavirus and in that way football is also calling the international community to act together, to ensure that a level playing field exists in relation to access to vaccines, to treatments, to diagnostic tests and that this is the case all over the globe.

00:10:08

We have to get this message to a global audience through football, using football as a very powerful tool for good. FIFA is proud to use the upcoming platform of the FIFA Club World Cup,

starting in three days from now, and more generally FIFA's global impact to promote the importance of fair access to vaccines, treatments and diagnostics as part of the ACT Accelerator initiative, an incredible initiative, and to remind people watching our games and to remind the global football community of the importance of adhering to vital public health measures.

We all know that the coronavirus does not discriminate and we ask everybody to play their part in eliminating the threat that this disease poses to all our lives by maintaining the key steps to stop transmission and stay safe from the virus, including of course physical distancing, wearing masks and hand hygiene.

There are many tactics which are needed to win a football game. At the same time we must take a comprehensive approach to defeating COVID-19. We must do it all and do all it takes and we must remember that the only way we will all be safe is if we make sure that everyone is safe.

Equity, equality, team spirit, fairness can make this happen and with this in mind I'm also delighted that FIFA can once more count on the support of a true football legend to spread this message even in a more powerful way than anyone else can do.

00:12:14

Michael Owen is here with us and he will help definitely to amplify the message together with many other FIFA legends so thank you, Michael, for being with us. Thank you, Dr Tedros, for giving us this opportunity and the floor and we are on the same team.

TAG We are in the same team. Thank you so much, Gianni, and thank you for your continued partnership and support. Now it gives me great pleasure to introduce Michael Owen, who scored more than 400 goals in a 17-year career for club and country. Michael, it's an honour to have you with us today. Over to you.

MO Thank you very much. We are all aware that there have been challenges throughout the coronavirus pandemic and equally I would like to share my deepest condolences on behalf of the FIFA legends to all the victims who have lost their lives as a result of COVID-19. Our thoughts are with their families and friends at this difficult and challenging time.

00:13:23

It is important that football remains in tune with society and plays an important leadership role in addressing issues that affect us all. It has been clear from day one that health comes

first and this remains the case but almost in a different way than before.

As individuals we need to remain committed to the six-step process. The message is consistent and I am delighted that FIFA's return to competitive football through the FIFA Club World Cup is also being used to remind a global TV audience watching our game of the importance of adhering to vital public health measures; wash your hands frequently, cover your nose and mouth if you sneeze or cough, avoid touching your face, stay at least 1m distance from others, if you feel unwell stay at home, wear a mask and open a window when inside closed rooms.

Over and above that it is important that both of you, Dr Tedros and Gianni, remind the powers that be that there needs to be equity and fairness in access to vaccines. This has been a global pandemic and globally we need to give access to vaccination. Thank you both for your efforts.

00:14:54

TAG Thank you. Thank you so much, Michael, and thank you for using your voice and influence to support the Act Together campaign. If there is one thing we have all learned in the past year it's that when we act alone we're vulnerable but when we act together we can save lives. Fadela, back to you.

FC Thank you, Dr Tedros. I would like now to open the floor to questions from journalists. I remind you that you will need to raise your hand using the raise your hand icon in order to get in the queue. I would like to start these questions and answers by inviting Graham Denver from Associated Press to ask the first question. Graham, are you online?

GR Yes, I am, Fadela. Thank you. Thank you very much, everyone, for being available to us. A question about the World Cup qualifying games that resume or start next month. We have more than 150 national teams due to be playing with players scattering all around the world from their clubs to go to their home countries to join up with their national teams.

Is this an acceptable risk to be taking at this stage in the pandemic and is it realistic to keep asking governments to make exemptions for professional sportspeople in terms of quarantine to make the games work?

00:16:37

FC Thank you. President Infantino, please. You have the floor.

GI Thank you very much. Thanks for the question, which indeed is an important one. We have been developing together with the World Health Organization already in the course of last year a so-called back to football protocol. It is obvious and I want to repeat this here once and for all again that health is priority number one.

When we play football we want to protect the health of all those involved; the players, the coaches, the referees, the officials, the fans and whatever we do and whatever we will do as well in the next qualifying games for the World Cup or some continental competitions, we will do by adhering to a clear health protocol which will not put at risk the health of anyone.

It is always of course a balance that we have to take but we need to respect the legislation, the decisions of the governments all over the world. In many countries football has come back; in some not yet; in some with spectators; in others without spectators so the situation is very, very different all over the world.

00:18:03

When you organise national team games you also give hope and joy to people but everything needs to be done respecting health conditions so we have our protocol. It is put in place. We will monitor the situation of course in the coming weeks.

We can say - and we were hearing it earlier today from Dr Tedros again - that the situation is evolving week by week or day by day. The international games will be in March. By then we'll assess the situation, we'll see where we can play, in what conditions but we'll certainly not take any risk with the health of anyone when we play football.

FC Thank you. I would like now to invite Sophie Mkwena from SABC, South Africa, to ask the next question. Sophie, you have the floor.

SO Thank you. My question is directed to the President of FIFA, Gianni Infantino. President, can you elaborate, in terms of ensuring that we use football - or soccer as we normally call it in South Africa - to mobilise the nation and show that the world is safe from COVID-19, what is it that FIFA will be doing to ensure that the world is safe from COVID-19 using its footprint around the world but its popularity as one of the most popular sports around the world, particularly on my continent, Africa?

00:19:52

GI Thank you very much for the question and, by the way, speaking about Africa and speaking about also the question that was asked just earlier, for the national team games in Africa in November last year players were coming not only from the 54 African countries but also from 61 countries around the world back to Africa in order to play football - or soccer, as you call it.

What are we doing or what do we want to do? We want to be a responsible organisation at FIFA. This is a new FIFA and we are aware of the responsibility that we have. We are aware of not only the magic of football, which of course is very important to millions, hundreds of millions or even billions of people around the world, but also about the power of football and we need to use this in a responsible way.

Last year, I think it was on 11th March 2020 when the WHO declared that COVID-19 was a pandemic; the day after in the morning I was sitting in the office of Dr Tedros asking him, what can we do to help? We are facing an unprecedented situation for everyone, for football of course as well but we want to help, we want to be able to do something.

00:21:23

So we started immediately of course only maybe with campaigns, with messaging, with supporting and helping through the voice of football, of FIFA legends, the messages that the WHO and all governments were spreading because it is true that many children, boys and girls all over the world, listen maybe more if you have Michael Owen, who is here today, or other football legends saying that you have to wash your hands than if it is a big personality of whatever, politics or health or a doctor.

We need to put this power at the service of the community and that's what we do here as well today. Last year we have been supporting several campaigns together with WHO. Today we are here to again give our support to the Act Together process to have equality, to have fair access to vaccines.

It is important that a message comes as well from the football community. Football means so much to so many people. We are all locked down more or less everywhere. We need to come back to normality and football can help definitely a little bit to show to the people that we are coming back to normality.

00:22:57

That's why we are here, to co-operate, to pass the messages that the WHO is also passing and all the governments around the

world are passing and to help and to be part of the team to win this match against COVID-19.

FC Thank you, President Infantino. Let's come back to Geneva; Laurent Zero from ATS, Swiss news agency. Laurent, are you online?

LA Yes, Fadela, thank you for taking my question; also a question to Gianni Infantino on vaccine because you mentioned fair and equitable access. There's been a debate around the Olympics on whether the athletes should be vaccinated earlier than they are supposed to in order for them to be able to participate in the Olympics.

There will be two World Cups of Clubs this year; there are these national qualifiers that were mentioned, the World Cup next year so what's your position on that for the players? Do you think it will be possible to have full attendance at the World Cup next year? Thank you.

00:24:21

GI Thanks again, thanks for the question. Let me answer the last question first. Yes, next year at the World Cup 2022 in Qatar from 21st November to 18th December we will have full stadiums. We must have this; COVID will be defeated by then and we all will have learned to live with it.

But if in two years from now we are not there yet then I think we will have a bigger problem than the World Cup. We will not have because there are many, many very competent people working on it starting from here, WHO so I'm very, very confident that the World Cup next year will be incredible and will be the same magic World Cup as all World Cups, really bringing the world together and uniting the world.

After a year or more of confinement, of lock-downs, of travel restrictions I think we are back and we will be back to where we have to be.

With regard to to your question about the vaccines, again if we are here today, if I am here today it's to amplify the message in relation to fair access to vaccines all over the world. I've been travelling a little bit in the last few weeks to Asia, to Africa. We need to guarantee that everyone can be safe and for this we are here to support WHO, to support COVAX and all the other organisations.

00:26:04

But let me answer very clearly to your question; in terms of priorities the priority for the vaccines is of course for the people at risk and for the health workers. This is very clear in our mind. I don't consider, we don't consider football players as a priority group in this respect.

Of course for safety reasons in the months to come in the context of international competitions, of travel and so on vaccination might be recommended at some point and the Olympic Games, as you mentioned, are of course only in the summer.

But all this will happen of course respecting the established order of the solution and there are people who are at risk and these people should have priority of course to have the vaccines and it's not the football players or officials.

FC Thank you. I would like now to invite Shalid Nahar, I believe a reporter from German Sport TV channel, to ask the next question. You have the floor.

00:27:27

SH Hello. Mr Infantino, can you hear me?

FC Yes, we can. You can ask your question.

SH I have a question about the Club World Cup that has been postponed in China this year. Is there already availability for a date to get this edition of the Club World Cup which was planned this year?

GI Thanks for the question as well. Since you are from Germany you know that we are starting the new Club World Cup together with Bayern Munich being the European participant in three days from now in Qatar. Of course it's not yet the big Club World Cup which should have taken place in the summer of 2021, this summer, in China.

We needed - and we did so of course very quickly - to make space for the postponed European Championship and for the postponed Copa America, which will take place this summer. So we have not yet fixed a new date for the new version of the Club World Cup.

00:28:37

What we know is that the current version, the reduced version with the champion of each continent takes place next week or this week in Doha and then at the end of the year, in December 2021 in Japan and then we are looking at next year or the year

after to see when the new Club World Cup will take place and this will be again an amazing competition, again bringing people together from all over the world.

FC Thank you. I would like now to give the floor to Stephanie Nebahe from Reuters. Stephanie, you have the floor.

ST Thanks very much. Can you hear me?

FC Yes. Go ahead, Stephanie. We can hear you perfectly.

ST Thank you. I wondered if Dr Tedros might give us an update of his assessment of the situation in Wuhan so far in terms of access to sites and quality of information or research received from Chinese colleagues there and whether you still expect them to visit the Institute of Virology.

I also note that Secretary of State Blinken said earlier today that China is - quote - falling short in allowing access. Do you share that assessment or have any comment, please? Thank you.

FC Thank you, Stephanie. Dr Ryan will take this question or Maria Van Kerkhove. Maria will start.

00:30:12

MK Yes, thank you, Fadela. Thank you for the question, Stephanie. The team is on the ground, as you know, and there is quite a media coverage following them around so you've seen some of the visits that they have made. They are having very productive discussions with Chinese counterparts, visiting different hospitals around Wuhan. They've had a very good visit to the market, seeing first-hand the stalls and walking through and we've had some good feedback from them of the importance of being able to physically walk through.

They've also met with counterparts at the Wuhan CDC and other different levels of the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and they're having very good discussions but, as you know, the plans and the visits that they have provide detailed information and all of this detailed information requires analysis, which is ongoing between the international team and the Chinese counterparts and all of that detailed analysis leads to more and more questions.

00:31:10

So anyone who's ever been on a mission like this before - and I know there are many scientists watching this as well - knows that the more detail you have on the ground the more questions you

have. The teams will follow the information, they will follow the science and continue to ask questions and analyse data.

They will visit the Institute of Virology; that is being planned but we do leave them the freedom to decide the visits that they need to make throughout the course of the mission that they have. Their focus is on the early cases and they're having very good discussions around that and we will wait to make an assessment, for the team to do that themselves. We need to give them the space to be able to carry out this scientific study.

MR Just again may I remind everyone that this is an international mission and a mission that was mandated through the World Health Assembly by a unanimous resolution asking that the DG send such a mission, which he has done; a preliminary mission in July and the full mission now. There are experts from ten countries across a range of all of the key areas needed.

00:32:25

Maria has outlined what the team are doing and progress is being made but as we've always said, all of the answers may be there on this occasion; they may not be. We continue to ask the questions, we continue to push for more data because as part of any investigation of any infectious disease event as you gather more information you get some answers and then it creates more questions. It's a detective story and you go through again and you answer more questions.

The fact that you have to ask a different question two weeks later to a different person doesn't mean that someone is holding back information. It means you haven't asked the right question yet so that's the process and that's the scientific process of discovery and finding things out; that's what we're trying to do; push back the window so we can see the origin of this virus, which is important for everyone.

The other thing I would say; many people externally are making references to the fact that they won't accept the report when it comes out or the report is already not a report they will accept or that there's other intelligence available that may show different findings.

00:33:31

I would ask right now as I sit here; no other country has provided any documentary intelligence or other information to WHO. We are out there looking for it. We are in the field with experts from

ten countries looking to find the answers. If you have the answers, if you think you have some answers please let us know.

We've had this here before at this very press conference; people making allusions to intelligence that was available that had the answers that was never provided. So who's responsible here and who's acting responsibly? To say that you won't accept a report before it's even written, to say that you have intelligence that is not being provided.

I think we need to recognise that at the moment the international community - not WHO, the international community under the World Health Assembly of 194 countries has a team in the field that Dr Tedros has put in the field. It deserves the support of the international community and it deserves to be able to finish its work.

Not that all the answers can be found this time but it's certainly, for me, time for people who say and think they have information to start providing it.

00:34:42

FC Thank you. Now I would like to invite Bianca Rauthier from Oglobo to ask the next question. Bianca, you have the floor.

BI Hi, Fadela. Can you hear me?

FC Very well. Go ahead, please.

BI Thanks a lot. Good afternoon, everyone. My question is about Brazil because the Ministry of Health said that COVAX would send ten to 14 million doses of the Oxford vaccine to Brazil from February but at the same time PAHO said COVAX would deliver 35 million doses to 36 Caribbean and Latin American countries from mid February.

It would mean that Brazil would get at least a third of doses from the region. I think there is confusion with these figures. Could you please clarify? We have the plan for Brazil. What can Brazil expect from COVAX in terms of doses and distribution dates? Thanks a lot.

FC Thank you, Bianca. I think we will start with Dr Aylward. Bruce, you have the floor.

00:36:02

BA Thank you so much, Bianca. As we mentioned last week, the COVAX facility now is getting a better sight line on the timing for the emergency use listing of the products that it has in its

portfolio and the key ones are going to be the AstraZeneca products that are going to come out and hopefully be available from February.

What Bianca's referring to, just so everyone is aware, is over the weekend the COVAX facility has looked at the available volumes and then it's calculated for all of the participants in the COVAX facility, all 190 countries what they call indicative allocations so how much of that product should be available to those countries starting from late February and then running into March and right through the first half of the year.

Bianca, I wish I could give you the exact numbers but as there were 190 letters that went out yesterday I'm afraid I can't remember exactly what's being allocated to which and for clarification on that I think the information's just gone out to the countries over the last day.

They need a couple of days to reconcile that and remember as well, the numbers that went out are indicative volumes so they're ranges so for one country it could be from two million to three million depending on what the final volumes from the producers are, whether or not all these products get through emergency use listing, etc.

00:37:42

So I don't know what's exactly happened in terms of the numbers you're referring to but sometimes people read the top end of the numbers and another audience may read the bottom end of the numbers but there may be a couple of different reasons if they're not aligning.

In the case of Brazil you may also be aware that they have bilateral arrangements on the AstraZeneca product so again I'm not quite sure of the absolute specifics but I think the good news is that the COVAX facility has been able to go out to all the countries that are part of the facility over the weekend, give them the indicative volumes and a sight line on what they look like from February, which is a clear indication of course that that is the timeline to start delivering from the facility to multiple countries.

FC Thank you, Dr Aylward. I would like to invite Dr Simao to add some elements. Dr Simao.

00:38:39

MS Thank you, Fadela. Very, very briefly, Bianca, because this indicative allocation is actually based on projections of what's in

the contract but also we will have to take into account the regulatory aspects. These vaccines will also need to be approved for emergency use authorisation in the countries.

Also we are still waiting to see the actual projection of how many doses will be available in February and March from the manufacturers because you will have seen, there are some glitches in the manufacturing of the different vaccines at this stage and there may be less volumes to be allocated - you'll know that - in the next few weeks.

But, as Bruce said, this is an indicative allocation, there is a range and we put it out so that countries know it will be coming but the volumes have still to be addressed, the number of doses will still need to be taken into account according to the supply when the time is ready. Thank you.

FC Thank you, Dr Simao. Dr O'Brien, you have the floor.

KOB Yes, I'd just like to make one other point; for self-financing countries in the facility countries also informed the facility what fraction of the population they wanted to cover and not all countries elected to cover 20%; some of them went lower, some of them went higher.

00:40:21

So the indicative allocations for any one country also represent, if they were a self-financing country, what their desire was that they communicated to the facility at the time when they committed to the facility. I think it's just important that when any comparisons are being made across countries there are a number of features that go into these indicative allocations. Thank you.

FC Thank you, Dr O'Brien. I would like now to invite Tamara from Georgia to ask the next question. Tamara, you have the floor. Tamara, you have the floor. Can you please unmute yourself?

TA Yes, thank you for this opportunity. I'm from Georgian TV company Formula, a Georgian journalist. I wanted to ask you; two days ago the Prime Minister of Georgia, Mr Giorgi Gakharia made a statement that he had a conversation with Mr Tedros and that Georgia can expect the first batch of vaccines at the end of February.

00:41:38

Can you tell us more details about this conversation and of course about the vaccine, when we can expect it, how many doses we can expect and also which vaccine can Georgia expect? Thank you for this opportunity.

FC Thank you, Tamara.

TAG Thank you very much. I think this is a very detailed need for information and it's very difficult to communicate with countries on details of things through media. We have a channel to communicate with each and every one of them so I'm really sorry but it would be better to communicate through that channel, not through media. Thank you.

FC Thank you, Dr Tedros. I would like now to invite John Zaracostas to ask the next question. John, you have the floor.

JO Good afternoon. Can you hear me?

FC Yes, very well. Go ahead, John.

JO My question is basically - perhaps Dr O'Brien can answer it; I would like to know, what is the current production capacity for COVID vaccines; what have the manufacturers conveyed to the WHO will be scaled up and if we have a time period because in previous influenza crises or pandemics we had a good picture from industry where they were on the production. It doesn't seem to be the case right now.

00:43:22

MR John, I'll take the floor only to wish you a Happy New Year and then to pass on to someone who'll have a much better answer for you than me.

KOB Let me start off and there may be others who would like to contribute as well. The COVAX facility has committed supply of over two billion doses for 2021. The month-by-month indicative supply projections are available on the COVAX facility website; we'll be happy to post those so that you can easily access them.

They are based on - not just for the COVAX facility but frankly the supply projections for all countries are based on projections from manufacturers about what their expectations are for yields of the vaccines and for the timeline of those yields and being able to produce the vaccines.

00:44:21

As you know, for biological products there is no certainty around being able to secure those yields with 100% surety and we are

hearing about challenges that manufacturers are having on their production so again we have to emphasise that those month-by-month projections for the vaccines that have secured contracts are what they are, they are projections and we are all in the place where we hope that those production expectations are met.

In addition to the over two billion doses there are also first-right-of-refusal options on another billion doses in the COVAX facility for products that have not yet completed their clinical efficacy trials that are supported for research and development and therefore as part of the contracts for support of that R&D have the right of first refusal for the COVAX facility.

Then thirdly there are negotiations that are ongoing with additional manufacturers by the COVAX facility to secure additional doses. I hope that gives you a sight-line for where you can find the month-by-month information and what that information actually means. I'll turn that over to anybody else who might want to contribute.

FC Thank you, Dr O'Brien. Dr Aylward.

00:45:59

BA Hi, John. It's Bruce here. Yes, the simplest thing, guys; there's a fantastic resource on the web; the simplest thing is just Google COVAX supply forecast and then you can go and click on it and it gives a great break-down; I just thought it'd make it a little easier for people to find it. What it shows is by quarter what the projections for that 2.2 billion doses look like and then it also provides you break-down in terms of WHO regions, an AU view, a view by product.

So it's quite a nice document that GAVI has posted by the best part of the document is what's on the right-hand side of each page because on each page it has caveats and it explains what the challenges are around the licensing of those products, the yields, etc.

So I think GAVI and the facility have done a great job trying to give people as much visibility as possible on the pipeline and will continue to do so as they go forward. That can be found there but with the caveats on the right-hand which are so important. We're dealing with a biologic process here. All the manufacturers are working flat-out to try and optimise their volumes but at the end of the day there are challenges as you move from developing clinical trial lots that you use for your trials to the commercial-scale production.

00:47:23

Often you run into problems with yields and other aspects that just mean your volumes end up being lower, as we've seen to the disappointment of many recently but that's part of the challenge. Everyone's working very hard to get as much product as possible out there but there will be setbacks and bumps along the road as we go.

SS Just to supplement that, as Kate and Bruce have said, manufacturing at this scale is a challenge. We're wanting billions of doses suddenly and the world is not used to manufacturing this many vaccines so one thing we would like to encourage is for developers who now have vaccines that have passed the clinical efficacy trials to really explore how they can expand manufacturing capacity by partnering with other manufacturers that have spare capacity in different parts of the world.

This is something that would be useful for this pandemic but also beyond that because I think it would be building capacity in different parts of the world and we set up a mechanism; the Director-General announced the creation of something called the COVID technologies access pool way back in May 2020 and that was really to encourage and enable anybody who had products, who had technology, who had knowledge or data that they wanted to share to do it through that, thereby linking producers and developers who have the know-how with those who actually have the capacity.

00:48:58

We also have to remember that vaccines need the raw material, they need to be filled and finished and packed but they also then need the syringes and the vials and everything that goes with getting the vaccine into people. So side-by-side with investments in manufacturing of the actual vaccines we also need to make sure that we have the syringes and needles and the other materials that are needed.

The COVAX facility has been focusing on making sure that all of that happens as well but I think more sharing of technology and looking at innovative ways of increasing production would help meet some of the shortfalls that we're seeing today.

00:49:38

FC Thank you, Dr Swaminathan. I would like now to invite Isabel Sacco from EFE to ask the next question, maybe the last one. Isabel, you have the floor.

IS Good afternoon, everyone. I would like to ask Dr Aylward; maybe he has in mind information on the number of vaccines, the indicative allocation that he mentioned by volumes; maybe he can provide this information. I understand that it was said last week that this information will be publicly available so I would like to know where and when this information will be accessible to all of us. Thank you.

BA Hi, Isabel. Thank you for the question and sorry I may not have been clear enough in an earlier comment. About ten days ago the COVAX facility published on the GAVI website the indicative allocations by region and by month starting from the February/March period right out through so if you go onto the GAVI...

Actually the easiest way to find it is Google it; just Google the COVAX supply forecast. If you Google that then you will find there's a link to a document which is updated regularly. We're going to try and update that every week or two weeks as numbers change.

00:51:12

What that document will provide is the indicative allocation by month and by region so you'll be able to see for each of the six WHO regions how many doses they can expect during each of the months.

As mentioned in the answer to the last question there're a lot of caveats or potential considerations that we have to bear in mind because producers may have smaller volumes than they're hoping for, there may be delays in providing emergency use listing of a product, etc, so these may change.

But the indicative allocations are being published now on the site and they can be found there so if there's any trouble just contact our media folks, who will be able to make sure you have access to that important information, again with the caveats that these are very much indicative numbers and you're all seeing the challenges some manufacturers are having reaching the volumes that they've committed to so these are subject to some change as we go forward, especially in the short term.

The other thing that was referred to by some of our earlier speakers was indicative allocations at the country level but as the Director-General said, those are direct communications to the countries, to the Ministries of Health, between the facility and them and best is working directly with them to understand what their indicative numbers could look like.

00:52:37

But again bearing in mind all the caveats so I think it's going to be so important and helpful also if the media - I'm not going to tell you your job but I think the more we can help populations understand that this is indicative, this is if everything goes right. If there're problems then the numbers will be lower and smaller but everybody's doing everything possible to optimise those numbers.

It all comes back to what Mike has been saying all along, Dr Tedros and Maria though; in the meantime we've got social distancing, we've got masks, we know how to prevent the spread of this disease and we have to rely on those during this period, as tough as that is.

FC Dr Ryan, you have the floor.

MR Thank you, Bruce; you're absolutely correct in terms of what we need to continue doing but just also on that with relation to vaccines, certainly Kate and her team and the vaccination team and our teams working in terms of country support with the regional platforms and the World Bank have been working on these vaccine readiness plans at country level.

00:53:41

They're all being currently uploaded into the public domain too so everyone can see, especially donors and others, what it's going to take to deliver those vaccines because again we've seen even with small numbers of vaccines in some countries part of the problem has been actually delivering those vaccines, generating the vaccine demand, doing the proper and safe vaccination, monitoring the implementation and doing it properly.

So vaccine is one part of the solution; being able to deliver those vaccines efficiently... So we would ask all donors and all investors and all financial institutions to look at those national vaccine plans and see where you can invest. It's not just an investment in vaccine we need. We need an investment in the country's capacity to deliver those vaccines sustainably and also that will obviously help strengthen core immunisation programmes as well at country level. So I think there's a good investment there for everybody to support.

00:54:36

FC Dr Van Kerkhove.

MK Yes, I don't want to answer the question. I just want to take the opportunity, as the least sports person up here, to thank Mr Infantino for the leadership that sports players play around the world. One of the things we're learning is about being a good role model and you brought it up in your answer; that sports professionals, at the professional level but also at high school level, university level, even the little kid level; being a good role model is what we really need to see right now.

It's very, very hard to keep up all of the hand hygiene and the mask wearing but if we have sports players, we have leaders all over the world to show us that it's cool to do it helps and we can use all the help we can get.

So as the least sports person up here I wanted to say thanks because I didn't have an opportunity to say it before.

FC Thank you. Dr Tedros, you have the floor.

TAG Maria has already said what I wanted to say so thanks, Gianni. I also thank all who have joined today; thank you so much and all the best until we see you in our next presser. Bye. Gianni, would you like to say something as we are closing?

00:55:50

GI The last word before we go? Of course. Tedros, thank you very much to all the team here. How should I say? As a normal person who, like billions of those following this conference, is watching every day what is going on I would simply like as well to commend all those persons here and all those who work to make our lives better, to save our lives.

We want to play a little part in that but what these ladies and gentlemen here are doing, the medical staff are doing; this is just incredible; we cannot underline it enough. Let me just say as well, when I hear sometimes criticisms here and there - someone mentioned even today, I can just appeal to everyone, this is an unprecedented situation.

We all have to work together. We all make mistakes, everyone makes mistakes but we have to work all together. When I hear that vaccines have been developed in less than one year, this is incredible. This would not have happened without the great work of many people. We have to recognise that.

00:57:05

Now today I heard that there are around 2.2 billion vaccines available. It's not enough; we need to do more, which means we

have to work together. Let's join forces, let's work all together, let's support WHO but all those who are working to save our lives.

That's why we are here, that's why many, many players, football players, legends, sportspersons, famous or not famous are embracing this challenge and this fight all together because united we'll overcome this. For me this is the most important message; let's continue and let's win this match. Thank you very much.

TAG Thank you. Thank you very much.

FC Thank you, President. Just reminding journalists, you will receive the DG's speech and the audio file of this press conference just after the press conference and the transcript will be on the WHO website tomorrow. Thank you all for your participation and see you next time.

00:58:10