

PAHO will begin procuring COVID-19 vaccines to expand access in Latin America and the Caribbean

The organization launched a "new opportunity" to help countries procure enough vaccines to control transmission.

Washington, D.C., August 11, 2021 (PAHO) – Taking action to expand access to the COVID-19 vaccines, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) will use its Revolving Fund to help countries in Latin America and the Caribbean procure enough vaccines to control transmission, PAHO Director Carissa F. Etienne said.

“The region is still short of the doses needed to turn the tide of the pandemic,” she told reporters at a media briefing. “We need a significant influx of vaccines and a more equitable process for distributing them. With this in mind, PAHO is offering our Member States a new opportunity to access COVID-19 vaccines.”

PAHO’s Revolving Fund will go “beyond the 20 percent COVAX offers,” Dr. Etienne explained, referring to COVAX’s commitment to procure vaccines for 20% of the region’s population—the most at-risk groups.

The Revolving Fund, which has procured other vaccines for the region at low prices for 42 years, is already receiving requests from countries for COVID-19 vaccines for the last three months of 2021 and for 2022, Dr. Etienne said. “So far, more than 20 countries have formally expressed interest and the number is growing by the day.”

Up until now, the Revolving Fund has served as one of the COVAX purchasing mechanisms and worked directly with countries requesting support to deliver donations through bilateral agreements. It has deployed over 20 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to Latin American and Caribbean countries procured through COVAX.

“Our region needs to pursue all possible avenues to expedite access and ensure countries reach their vaccination goals,” Dr. Etienne said.

“We still need more donations; and we still need COVAX to deliver on its original commitment. We also need to create new opportunities that meet the diverse needs of our Member States, and that increase the supply of vaccines to the people and communities at greatest risk.”

The Revolving Fund initiative “will benefit every country in the region, but especially those that lack the resources and negotiating power to secure the doses necessary to protect their people,” she added.

Dr. Etienne drew attention to the Revolving Fund’s pivotal role in the history of strong immunization in Latin America and the Caribbean, where countries have enjoyed high rates of vaccine coverage, “regardless of their income or infrastructure.”

The Revolving Fund consolidates regional demand so that vaccines can be procured in bulk. It also procures syringes, cold-chain equipment, and other supplies.

“For decades, the Revolving Fund has been a catalyst of equity and solidarity and has been responsible for protecting generations of children across Latin America and the Caribbean from vaccine-preventable diseases,” Dr. Etienne said.

She addressed the pandemic’s continuing toll on the Americas, where more than 1.3 million COVID-19 cases and more than 19,000 deaths were reported over the past week.

Cases and deaths continue to rise in Canada, Mexico, and the United States. In Central America, cases are decreasing in Panama and Costa Rica but increasing in Honduras, Belize, and El Salvador.

In the Caribbean, cases are rising in Cuba, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Martinique, the Bahamas, and Dominica. “Over the past month, infections increased 30-fold in Martinique and there has been a significant spike in hospitalizations,” Dr. Etienne said.

In South America, the news is better, she said. Cases and deaths are

declining in the Andean region and Brazil, and across the Southern Cone. This includes substantial decreases in cases in Colombia, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

Links

[Conferencia de prensa de la OPS sobre COVID-19](#) **SPANISH/ENGLISH**

[PAHO Press Briefing on COVID19](#) **ENGLISH**

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The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) works with the countries of the Americas to improve the health and quality of life of its population.

Founded in 1902, it is the world's oldest international public health agency. It serves as the Regional Office of WHO for the Americas and is the specialized health agency of the Inter-American system.