

PM: Humanity must unite in the fight against disease

- Prime Minister Boris Johnson will host the Global Vaccine Summit virtually today
- More than 50 countries and organisations will come together to secure funding for Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance
- Summit aims to raise at least \$7.4bn (approx. £6bn) to immunise a further 300 million children in world's poorest countries by 2025

Prime Minister Boris Johnson will today (Thursday 4 June) open the UK-hosted Global Vaccine Summit and urge nations to pledge funding for vaccinations to save millions of lives in the poorest countries and protect the world from future outbreaks of infectious diseases.

Representatives of over 50 countries, including at least 35 heads of state or government, as well as leaders of private sector organisations and civil society, will come together to raise funds for Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

The summit aims to raise at least \$7.4 billion (approx. £6 billion) for Gavi to immunise a further 300 million children in the world's poorest countries by 2025.

This vital funding will not only protect children from deadly diseases like polio, diphtheria and measles and save up to 8 million lives, but will also help ensure our global recovery from coronavirus.

By vaccinating millions of children against these other deadly diseases, we are protecting healthcare systems in the world's poorest countries so they can cope with rising coronavirus cases.

Health experts have warned that if the virus is left to spread in developing countries, this could lead to future waves of infection reaching the UK.

Addressing attendees as he opens today's summit, Prime Minister Boris Johnson will say:

I hope this summit will be the moment when the world comes together to unite humanity in the fight against disease.

Just as the UK is the single biggest donor to the international effort to find a coronavirus vaccine, we will remain the world's leading donor to Gavi, contributing £1.65 billion over the next five years.

I urge you to join us to fortify this lifesaving alliance and inaugurate a new era of global health co-operation, which I believe is now the most essential shared endeavour of our lifetimes.

People who are vaccinated protect themselves and the rest of the population by lowering the spread and risk of infection. When children are immunised against measles, typhoid and polio, it prevents outbreaks of these infectious diseases at a time when many countries are struggling to deal with the coronavirus pandemic.

As the world focuses on tackling coronavirus, the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and Gavi have warned that the pandemic is disrupting routine immunisation, affecting approximately 80 million children under the age of 1 across 68 countries.

The Prime Minister will also be joined by Bill Gates, Co-Chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Chair of the Gavi Board.

The UK is the largest supporter of Gavi to date, with International Development Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan recently announcing the UK's £1.65 billion pledge – funding which will immunise up to 75 million children.

International Development Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan, who will also take part in today's summit, said:

The world is quite rightly focusing on responding to the invisible killer that is coronavirus. But we cannot allow this pandemic to disrupt routine immunisation in some of the world's poorest countries and cause other deadly diseases to spread across the globe.

We know vaccines work, which is why at today's summit we need others to step up and pledge funds to Gavi, so it can continue to save the lives of millions of children and protect everyone from infectious diseases.

At the summit the Presidents of Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Bangladesh will explain how Gavi's support has helped save lives in their countries and strengthened the resilience of their healthcare systems against major disease outbreaks.

Health workers will speak about their experiences on the frontline, such as immunising people in the Democratic Republic of Congo against Ebola.

CEO of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance Dr Seth Berkley said:

Over the past two decades we have witnessed incredible progress boosting vaccine coverage in the world's poorest countries: more children in more countries are now protected against more diseases than at any point in history.

However, these historic advances in global health are now at risk of unravelling as COVID-19 causes unprecedented disruption to

vaccine programmes worldwide. We face the very real prospect of a global resurgence of diseases like measles, polio and yellow fever, which would put us all at risk.

That's why today's Global Vaccine Summit is so important, bringing together leaders from around the world – led by the UK – to build global health security and keep us all safe from further outbreaks.

Gavi, with UK support, is addressing the immediate needs triggered by coronavirus, including providing essential medical supplies and helping to increase testing and surveillance of the disease.

As part of the global effort to find a coronavirus vaccine, the UK is also the single largest donor of any country to the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations' (CEPI) urgent appeal.

If a safe and effective coronavirus vaccine is developed, Gavi will have a role in its delivery around the world. Global access will ensure a collective international recovery and reduce the risk of future waves of infection, which could come to the UK.