

UK calls for ceasefires to vaccinate people against Covid-19

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab will today call for local ceasefires across the globe so vulnerable people living in conflict zones can be vaccinated against Covid-19.

He will chair a meeting of the UN Security Council today and urge members to unite and agree a resolution for negotiated vaccine ceasefires, and to support equitable access to vaccines so that the most vulnerable people can be protected from the virus.

The Foreign Secretary will say allowing the virus to spread in areas without vaccination campaigns means a greater risk of new variants taking hold – risking further waves across the world.

More than 160 million people are at risk of being excluded from coronavirus vaccinations because of instability and conflict, including in Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

Global vaccination coverage is essential to beating coronavirus. That is why the UK is calling for a vaccination ceasefire to allow Covid-19 vaccines to reach people living in conflict zones and for a greater global team effort to deliver equitable access. We have a moral duty to act, and a strategic necessity to come together to defeat this virus.

The UK has been leading the international response to the pandemic, using its diplomatic weight and development expertise to help develop and distribute vaccines, support the global economy and encourage international collaboration. Global equitable access to coronavirus vaccines is the key to eliminating the threat of the virus in the UK as well as overseas. In today's interconnected world, the only way to be protected from Covid-19 is by making vaccinations available to all.

Temporary ceasefires would allow charities and healthcare workers to safely provide jabs to people living in active conflict zones. Alongside this, the UK is pushing for more funding for the UN's response to the pandemic, for the World Health Organisation and for the COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC), which will distribute 1.3 billion doses of coronavirus vaccines to developing countries this year.

The UK is one of the largest donors to the COVAX AMC, providing £548 million for the scheme which was launched at the UK-hosted Global Vaccine Summit in June 2020. In addition to this, the UK has used match funding to help raise \$1 billion from other donors for the COVAX AMC.

At the meeting today, the Foreign Secretary will also underline the importance of agreeing international co-operation to resolve long-term logistical barriers to equitable access, such as vaccine storage, delays in regulatory approval and managing complex supply chains.

He will push for sustained protection of humanitarian and health workers in conflict zones to make sure humanitarian help can get to those who need it and will say the international community must be allowed to monitor the progress of vaccination delivery and how well people are protected from violence during the process. He will call on governments worldwide to leave no one behind as they roll out vaccination programmes, so that vulnerable groups such as refugees and people living in conflict zones can be vaccinated.

The UK is using its presidency of the Security Council this month to drive further progress on global access to vaccines and the Prime Minister will be setting out further details at the virtual G7 leaders' meeting on Friday, as we work to build back better together.