

UK calls for states to protect immunisation programmes alongside search for Covid-19 vaccine

The UK has urged UN members to protect vital immunisation programmes across the world, while remaining focused on supporting the search for a coronavirus vaccine.

On July 15, the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF warned of an alarming decline in the number of children receiving life-saving vaccines around the world due to challenges posed by the pandemic.

During a virtual event hosted by the UK and the UN Foundation today attended by 200 UN member state representatives, scientists and global leaders, Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, said countries needed to not only come together to coronavirus, but also to ensure immunisation schemes continue to save lives from other infectious diseases such as measles, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis polio and typhoid.

The UK is already a world leader in efforts to find a coronavirus vaccine and defeat other deadly infectious diseases.

Oxford University this week announced that early trials show its new vaccine produces a strong immune response to coronavirus, in research backed by £84 million of UK Government investment.

We also pledged £1.65 billion (\$2 billion) to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, earlier this year, to support immunising a further 300 million children against vaccine-preventable diseases and save up to 8 million lives by 2025.

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Joint Minister of State for the UN at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department for International Development, said:

Diseases such as measles, polio, diphtheria and typhoid have already caused widespread devastation across the world for decades, but we cannot stop our work to suppress their impact.

We must continue to drive immunisation programmes for established vaccines while ensuring we unite to find and fund a global solution to combat the Covid-19 pandemic.

The UK and the UN Foundation continue with partners around the globe to support and drive a worldwide search for an effective Coronavirus vaccine, as well as treatments and diagnostics.

The UK has already pledged £250 million (\$315 million) to the Centre for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations' (CEPI) international vaccine research, for example, the largest contribution of any nation.

The UK is also prioritising the secondary impacts of the pandemic, particularly on essential health services, to ensure routine immunisation programmes are maintained and restored.

The UK will continue to work with all of our international partners, including the G7, G20, the EU, the UN, World Health Organization and other multilateral institutions, to deliver a strong global health response during the global pandemic.