

STATEMENT

by

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to the United Nations**

Open debate of the Security Council

on

**Ensuring equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines in contexts affected by conflict and
insecurity**

under the agenda item

Maintenance of international peace and security

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Mr. President,

Thank you for organizing this important debate on *Ensuring equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines in contexts affected by conflict and insecurity* under the agenda item *Maintenance of international peace and security* during these unprecedented, challenging times for us all. Slovakia associates itself with the statement of the European member states. Allow me to make a few additional observations.

COVID-19 is a humanitarian and development crisis that is threatening to leave deep social, economic and political scars for years to come, particularly in countries already weighed down by fragility, poverty and conflict. The pandemic has not only further increased vulnerabilities but also led to a large negative socio-economic impact. Therefore, a strong collaborative response is required to deal with the effects of COVID-19. The international community must work together to develop effective and affordable vaccines that can be made available for all.

There are both moral and practical imperatives to making sure that no one is left behind by vaccination programs. Until COVID-19 is under control everywhere in the world, we will not be able to restore international trade, travel, prosperity and security. Without collaboration, vaccine distribution will be uneven and risks exacerbating inequalities, conflicts, and tensions.

Fair and equitable access to a successful COVID-19 vaccine, regardless of income has been enabled by €500 million of new European financial support for the global vaccine initiative COVAX for millions of people across the world. Delivery of vaccines to low and middle-income countries is not just a moral imperative, it is enlightened self-interest. Slovakia remain committed to equitable access to vaccines, and COVAX is the best mechanism to ensure international vaccine solidarity.

The European Investment Bank (EIB) agreed €400 million of financing to support the participation of low and middle income economies in COVAX Advance Market Commitment (AMC). This rapidly approved financing, guaranteed by the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD) and alongside €100 million grant support from the European Commission to COVAX AMC will support access to safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines in 92 low and middle-income countries. This enables COVAX, a multilateral initiative aimed

at ensuring global fair and equitable access, to accelerate up-front investment essential to deliver vaccine doses as soon as they become available.

Slovakia has also financially contributed to UNDP's Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office COVID-19 Response & Recovery Fund that facilitates UN coherence and development effectiveness in addressing multifaceted issues such and engages in collaborative international efforts on effectively addressing the pandemic.

Local ceasefires are likely to be essential to enable life-saving vaccinations to take place. Overcoming these challenges will require greater national, regional and international cooperation and solidarity, with the UN playing a key coordinating role. Slovakia strongly supports the Secretary-General's call for cessation of all hostilities and implementation of a global ceasefire in all corners of the world to focus together on the true fight – defeating COVID-19.

Slovakia as a member of executive board of UNICEF commends its tireless efforts and commitments, which while overcoming challenges imposed by the COVID-19 in 2020, proved UNICEF once again to be the cornerstone of assistance to children worldwide.

In this respect, we commend UNICEF for its early response and efforts to focus on the continuity of services wherever possible, while continuing to advocate for child rights. We welcome the crucial role that UNICEF plays in COVAX and the ACT Accelerator and remain committed to equitable access to vaccines.

Slovakia continues its efforts to be a responsible partner and donor who under the brand of SlovakAid dynamically and flexibly responds to the needs of partner countries. In order to help our partners to tackle the coronavirus challenges more efficiently and reduce pandemic impact, Slovakia is showing its solidarity through providing humanitarian aid in various forms such as the Slovak-made PCR tests for COVID-19, pulmonary ventilators, financial contributions, small grants and other lacking medical equipment and material.

Strong international solidarity and support for the multilateral system is paramount in responding to the current crisis. It is more important than ever to focus on efficiency gains, and ensure that a maximum of aid reaches final beneficiaries. It is crucial to build synergies within

all UN agencies and work together with a clear distribution of tasks to efficiently and effectively address the needs of the most vulnerable.

I thank you.