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Media Statement

7 January 2021

UPDATE ON SARS-COV-2 VACCINE ROLLOUT STRATEGY

In line with our commitment to keep the public informed of developments relating to the vaccine rollout strategy, we wish to communicate recent developments of national importance.

When we held the press briefing on Sunday, 3 January 2021, we indicated that, in so far as our negotiations with individual manufacturing companies was concerned, we were bound by the non disclosure agreements and confidentiality clauses that we had agreed to. We accept these as we recognise that we are negotiation with independent private companies who may not want details disclosed until certain or all terms and conditions between the parties are met.

At the press briefing I, as the Minister of Health, gave an undertaking to the South African public that we will prioritise the protection of our health workers by ensuring that they receive the vaccine by February 2021. At the time I could not disclose further details. Today, I am pleased to announce that the Serum Institute of India (SII) has given us permission to make a public announcement and start engaging with all relevant stakeholders in preparation for the roll out.

In our presentation, we also stated that as a country, we have estimated 1.25 million health care workers both from public and private to be prioritised. It is for this reason that today we announce that South Africa will be receiving 1 000 000 (one million) doses in January and 500 000 (five hundred thousand) doses in February from the SII.

As recently as yesterday, our teams from the National Department of Health and the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) were fine tuning and aligning all the regulations processes to ensure that there are no unnecessary delays or regulatory impediments to activate this roll out.

We are happy that the SII/ Astra Zeneca vaccine has already been approved by various regulators and is being rolled out in other countries. Therefore, as part of expediting the regulatory process, SAHPRA is applying reliance on that regulatory work.

We also want to inform the public that the acquisition has been done directly by the Department of Health. This strengthens the credibility of the process as all the negotiations and payment issues are managed directly by government with the manufacturer.

We will now be engaging all relevant stakeholders in order to ensure the efficient and effective roll out of the vaccine for our health workers.

We urge the public to be patient with us as we continue to engage manufacturers. Our commitment remains to save and protect the lives of our people. We will not neglect our responsibility to protect lives and also fight this pandemic. We therefore call on all South Africans, members of the public, political parties, business, labour, NGOs and community leaders and members to work with us as we start this historic process.

Dr Zwelini Mkhize
Minister of Health
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