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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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## Minister Zweli Mkhize Public Briefing Statement

### South Africa's COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy

3 January 2021

**The Deputy Minister Dr Joe Phaahla**

**Members of the Executive Present**

**The Director General of Health Dr Sandile Buthelezi**

**Senior Officials of the Department of Health**

**Members of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on COVID-19 Vaccines and**

**Members of the Vaccine Task Team**

**Members of the Media**

**Fellow South Africans**

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of Health's Vaccine Rollout Strategy.

We have always said that the second wave is going to come and that the only way we will be protected is by developing herd immunity through vaccination. Because of that we have been working very hard by following all the research and development that has taken place globally. At this point we do believe that the issue of rolling out vaccines has to be handled with urgency and that is what has driven us to expedite the availability of vaccines. We believe that vaccines have to be made available to all

the South Africans, starting with frontline health care workers and the most vulnerable to ensure there is protection for them first as the most vulnerable groups.

The vaccines will need to be made available quickly so that most of our citizens are covered by the end of the first year of rollout- this year.

We have taken much of the advice of the MAC on Vaccines, which we introduced to the country in September, and we will ask Professor Barry Schoub, the chair of the MAC on Vaccines, to reintroduce the members in a little while and talk on the work they have been doing. The MAC on Vaccines has been working a grueling schedule since it was formed in September, in partnership with government, to advise us on the developments worldwide , suitability of candidates for our country and rollout strategies. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their selfless service to the country and for their expertise and dedication. I would like to indicate that the advisories from MAC will be uploaded by the end of this press briefing

Based on their advisories and input from various stakeholders, including other government departments, we have set up structures to expedite financing, sourcing and procurement and therefore the issue of the vaccine strategy will get undivided attention from Department and government. We therefore want to assure the public that we are very mindful of the urgency, particularly as we feel the impact of the second wave we are currently experiencing.

The purpose is to brief media on work being done to expedite the availability of vaccines for South Africans- I will touch on some of the key issues and Prof Barry Schoub and Dr Anban Pillay from the Department of Health will expand on these issues.

We are targeting minimum of 67% of the population to achieve herd immunity and the approach will be a phased rollout of the vaccine beginning with the most vulnerable in our population:

### Phase One:

- Front line health care workers (HCW). Target population: 1,250,000

### Phase Two:

- Essential workers. Target population: 2,500,000
- Persons in congregate settings. Target population: 1,100,000
- Persons >60 years. Target population: 5,000,000
- Persons >18 years with co-morbidities. Target population: 8,000,000

### Phase 3

- Other persons >18 years. Target population: 22,500,000

This means that by the end of phase 3, 40 350 000 citizens will have been immunized which is equivalent to approximately 67,25% of the population as we have indicated.

At this stage we have secured the doses that will be acquired through COVAX which will ensure that we immunize 10% of the population through this mechanism and, in line with President's statement, we expect the processes will have delivered the vaccine by beginning of second quarter. The funds to pay the outstanding amount after the deposit that has been made by the Solidarity Fund , around 1,8 billion, have been allocated and let us take the opportunity to once again appreciate the manner in which the Solidarity Fund has partnered with government.

Having secured for 10% of the population, we have embarked on other efforts to get the rest of the 57% of the population to be targeted by the end 2021 but, more importantly we are making efforts to obtain vaccines much earlier, hopefully as early as February 2021. This will very much depend on the success of current bilateral negotiations we are in the midst of with various companies

Additionally we have embarked on Public Private Partnerships with very good outcomes and we have approached medical aids to be part of the co-financing. The process is now at a stage where the Council for Medical Schemes has engaged various medical schemes and I have signed amendments of regulations to allow for vaccines and other therapeutics to be part of the prescribed minimum benefits

Business has also been engaged, particularly through Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) And therefore the total financing arrangement will include medical schemes, business and government with an arrangement made with Solidarity fund to provide a platform for collection of funds and for expedited and controlled procurement processes.

To optimize availability of stock for ourselves we are negotiating with all the manufacturers and pursuing those who are indicating appetite to make vaccines available sooner. We are in sensitive discussions and at this stage are bound by Non Disclosure Agreements but we will make announcements as soon as negotiations are concluded and the NDA's have been lifted

We are working closely with SAHPRA for regulatory clearance and so we believe they are ready to rapidly process applications.

Department has embarked on distribution and delivering structures: through national government, public sector, private sector, civil society, labour, traditional leaders and structures that will report to Provincial and District Co-ordinating Councils. This will ensure that we take all of society with us and get community buy and a well co-ordinated campaign that is successfully ruled out with good uptake of the vaccinations offered.

A lot of work has been involved and we will be doing more to communicate to the public to dispel some misconceptions and to ensure preparation for this massive campaign particularly because some of the vaccines will require two doses and it will be very important that we do not lose clients to follow up.

I have participated directly in discussions with vaccine manufacturers and we also participate in the ACT- Accelerator- where we are co-chairs with Norway- and the Africa Vaccine Initiative Task Team, which was initiated by president Ramaphosa and this makes us focus on Africa's acquisition of vaccines as expeditiously as many other countries are able to do so.

I hope this gives an overview of the efforts we have made to ensure that we do not get left behind in the equitable distribution of vaccines globally.

Issued by the Ministry of Health

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