

WHO says Africa needs 20 million second AstraZeneca jabs in six weeks

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COVID-19 patients receive oxygen at a place of worship in Ghaziabad, India.© UNICEF/Amarjeet Singh

Geneva, May 28 (RHC)-- Africa needs at least 20 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine within six weeks if those who have had their first shot are to get the second in time, the WHO said Thursday. "Africa needs vaccines now," Dr Matshidiso Moeti, the World Health Organization's regional director for Africa, said in a statement.

The WHO statement underlined the importance of respecting the recommended interval of eight to 12 weeks between doses to ensure a recipient's prolonged 81-percent protection rate. "In addition to this urgent need, another 200 million doses of any WHO Emergency Use Listed COVID-19 vaccine are needed so that the continent can vaccinate 10 percent of its population by September 2021," the statement added.

As of May 26, Africa had registered more than 4.7 million cases of coronavirus with nearly 130,000 deaths attributed to the virus.

Separately, the head of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) appealed to the international community to provide the required number of vaccine doses to the continent considering this a "collective security issue."

"We are not winning the vaccination battle in Africa," Africa CDC Director John Nkengasong said on Thursday during a weekly media briefing in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa. "Forty-three million doses of vaccines have been acquired, [of which] 23 million doses have been administered," he said.

Africa's vaccination campaigns to battle COVID-19 are also facing delays because of the export ban imposed by India, the main supplier of the AstraZeneca vaccine to COVAX, the UN-backed scheme that aims to deliver more than two billion doses to 92 of the world's poorest countries this year. India has halted vaccine exports as it grapples with a devastating resurgence of the disease.

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