

With rich states hoarding, WHO urges African nations to use expired vaccines

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Steve Biko Academic Hospital in Pretoria is battling an ever-increasing number of COVID-19 patients

Geneva, April 24 (RHC)-- Matshidiso Moeti, the WHO's Africa regional director, urged countries to "store vaccines safely" and let WHO study and get definitive advice "on whether the vaccines can be used for longer."

The appeal comes on the heels of an announcement by Malawi and South Sudan that they would throw away more than 70,000 doses of the expired Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine. The call for the African states to use expired jabs after a slow rollout in the continent comes amid widespread reports about the hoarding of vaccines by rich countries, chiefly the U.S. and the Europeans, which rights and health groups say undermines international health.

Early this month, Amnesty International condemned richer countries for failing a "rudimentary" test of global solidarity by hoarding Covid vaccines, accusing them of exploiting the pandemic to undermine human rights.

"The richest countries have effected a near-monopoly of the world's supply of vaccine, leaving countries with the fewest resources to face the worst health and human rights outcomes," said Amnesty International Secretary General Agnes Callamard.

According to AFP statistics, high-income countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom received more than half of the 680 million-plus doses administered worldwide, while the poorest countries received just 0.1 percent of the doses.

Another report by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) said that the United States, the UK, and the EU had pre-purchased enough COVID-19 doses to vaccinate their populations more than twice and the extra doses could be used to vaccinate citizens in 20 countries with humanitarian crises.

Rich countries with 14% of the world's population have reportedly secured 53% of the best vaccines, while Africa, which is home to 1.3 billion people, has been allocated only 300 million doses.

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