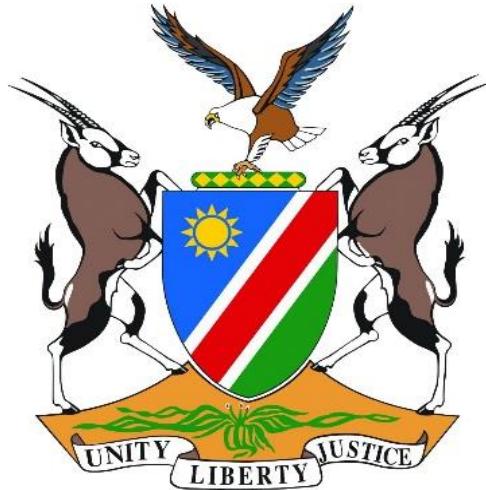


**REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**



**MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

**STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES, DR KALUMBI SHANGULA, MP, ON THE OCCASION OF RECEIPT OF ASTRAZENECA COVID -19 VACCINE DONATED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF GERMANY**

**27 SEPTEMBER 2021**

**WINDHOEK**

*\*Check against delivery*

Director of the Programme, Mr. Ben Nangombe, Executive Director, MOHSS

Hon. Dr. Esther Muinjangue, Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services

Hon. Jenelly Matundu, Deputy Minister in the Ministry of International Relations and Co-operation

Your Excellency, Mr. Herbert Beck, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany

Ambassador Penda Naanda, Executive Director, Ministry of International Relation and Cooperation

Senior Government Officials,

Distinguished Invited Guests,

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Common humanity dictates that we rally together and hold hands, especially when we are confronted with an existential threat such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic is indeed a threat to the entire world. No country, in fact no community has been left unscathed. It is for this reason that humanity have mobilized resource to combat and defeat this deadly enemy. From the social, economic, scientific, political and diplomatic fields, efforts have been made to stem the tide of the pandemic and return our countries to a semblance of normal life as we used to know it.
2. Today we are witnessing diplomacy in action as we receive a donation of 201 600 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine from the Federal Republic of Germany.
3. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the Federal Republic of Germany has come to our aid and has stood firmly by our side. It continues to support Namibia's battle this pandemic on many fronts. The Robert Koch Institute (RKI) supported Namibia to expand the capacity of the Namibia Institute of Pathology to be able to conduct testing for COVID-19 diagnosis. This was successfully achieved within a short time. Not long ago, in July, Germany donated the valuable medical supplies such as surgical gowns, FFP2/N95 face masks, care beds, antigen rapid tests and safety goggles, ventilators, pulse oximeters and PCR test kits.
4. The Robert Koch Institute (RKI) supports the Ministry of Health and Social Services within the framework of the Global Health Protection Programme (GHPP), which is primarily focused on the detection of and research into diseases and possible variants. It is under the same frameworks that the Institute supported us with the establishment of genome sequencing capacity in Namibia. Prior to setting up genome sequencing capacity in the country, sample for genome sequencing were transported to Germany and South Africa for testing. It is critically important that capacities to detect and diagnose the existence of pathogens of concern is available locally so that immediate interventions can be instituted. The donation we are receiving today is another demonstration of true solidarity and friendship between our two countries.

5. The donation will greatly contribute to the availability of and access to vaccines in our country. I express our profound gratitude and appreciation to the Government and people of the Federal Republic of Germany for their generosity.
6. Namibia targets to vaccinate 1 501 041 eligible persons against COVID-19 by March 2022 in order to attain the required level of herd immunity. As at 24 September 2021, a total of 256 580 first doses of COVID-19 vaccines have been administered, while 171 786 persons have completed the COVID-19 vaccination schedule.
7. Now that the country has a strong portfolio of vaccines available, I strongly encourage all eligible persons within our borders to go out in numbers and get vaccinated. Vaccination is the best weapon we have against COVID-19. Vaccines protect against severe illness and death. It has been demonstrated in many countries and we have seen it here in our country that persons who are not vaccinated are at a greater risk of experiencing severe COVID-19 illness and losing lives. The COVID-19 deaths recorded in the country over months are almost exclusively of persons who have not been vaccinated. We cannot say it enough, let us get vaccinated. The vaccines are now here. Let us hold hands to reach the target set for our country to get vaccinated. Some countries have implemented successful vaccination roll-outs. As a result, they have brought the pandemic under control in their countries.
8. Over this past weekend, I watched the English Premier leagues game in amazement, looking at how the Old Trafford Stadium was full to capacity, and spectators were not wearing masks. It was a lively atmosphere. This affirms that vaccination works. That it is the most powerful weapon we have in our arsenal to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and revive our economies, and social lives and livelihood. We can learn so much from these countries too. There is no reason why Namibia cannot be among the top performers on the continent, and even globally as far as vaccination is concerned.
9. History has taught us that COVID-19 cases tend to pick up during the festive seasons, when there are higher numbers of gatherings, especially family gatherings and also travel. I therefore, urge all fellow countrymen and women to get vaccinated so that before end of November the vast majority of the eligible population is vaccinated, and are protected from possible COVID-19 illness and hospitalization. We owe it to ourselves, our loved ones, our communities and the nation at large, to get vaccinated. I also caution those who have been vaccinated to continue to take all necessary precautions and not to adopt a carefree attitude. Being vaccinated does not mean that we can throw caution to the wind and put ourselves and others at risk.
10. I accept the donation of 201 600 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine from the Federal Republic of Germany to the Republic of Namibia. These doses will go a long way in protecting and saving lives. Once again, I thank the government of Germany for this generosity.