**JOINT PRESS RELEASE**

**CABO VERDE RECEIVED THE FIRST THE FIRST BATCH OF COVID-19 VACCINES**

**United Nations, Praia, March 12, 2021** – Cabo Verde received Friday, March 12, its first batch of the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine, sent through the COVAX Initiative, a partnership between the Government of Cabo Verde, CEPI (Coalition for Innovation in Epidemic Preparedness), GAVI (Global Vaccine Alliance) and WHO (World Health Organization), in partnership with UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), the World Bank and others.

This is a historic step towards achieving our goal of ensuring the equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines worldwide, and which is already considered the largest acquisition and operation of vaccine supply in human history. This delivery is the first batch part of the government plan agreed with the COVAX mechanism, aiming to cover 20% of the country's population (111,372 people) prioritizing the population at more at risk.

On March 8, after submission of the required regulatory documentation required from Cabo Verde, COVAX through UNICEF supply division shipped to the capital city of Praia 24,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, licensed and manufactured by serum institute (PVT) Limited from Maharashtra, India and the shipment arrived at Nelson Mandela International Airport on March 12, 2021.

This first batch of 24,000 doses, part of a larger batch of 108,000 doses already planned for Cabo Verde expected to arrive in the country until May 2021, enables the country to start the vaccination campaign against COVID 19, prioritizing critical target groups already identified.

To vaccinate all these groups, the equivalent of 20% of the country population, Cabo Verde will needs a total of 267,293 doses of vaccines against COVID-19 under the COVAX Initiative.

"Today is a moment of renewed hope and a witness to the solidarity the world needs to respond to the global challenges and end human, social and economic suffering brought by this pandemic. The arrival of this first batch of Covid-19 vaccines to Cabo Verde under the COVAX Facility is a historic step for the country in what is consider the largest and most complex vaccine distribution operation ever. For several months, the Government of Cabo Verde and COVAX's partners have been working together for this moment to be a reality. The United Nations System in Cabo Verde will continue to support the Government in implementing vaccination alongside other health and socio-economic measures already underway. We thank all countries and partners who contribute to COVAX aware that only together we can recover from this crisis and achieve sustainable development in Cabo Verde, leaving no one behind," said Ana Graça, the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations System in Cabo Verde.

WHO, through its Representative Hernando Agudelo, states that “WHO is proud to co-lead COVAX together with Gavi and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) in order to accelerate the development and manufacture of COVID- 19 vaccines and guarantee a fair and equitable access for all countries in the world ”. WHO is the normative entity that has been monitoring the whole process including global recommendation on priority groups, in order to ensure that health professionals and the front line workers, people over 65; and people underlying risky health problems, are properly protected. The main objective of COVAX is to make vaccines available to at least 20% of the population in all participating countries for the population at risk and that low and middle income countries receive these 20% of vaccines free of charge, as in Cabo Verde, thanks to financial support provided by several countries and international donors. ”

For the UNICEF Representative, Steven Ursino, “This is indeed a crucial moment for Cabo Verde, the culmination of several efforts led by the Government of Cabo Verde to stop and prevent the spread of the pandemic and save lives. The only way out of this crisis is to ensure that vaccines are available to everyone. The more people are vaccinated, the faster it will be to see a gradual return to normality and better access to health, education and protection services for all Cabo Verdeans. We salute the Government of Cabo Verde, in particular the Ministry of Health, for the commitment and all partners that support the COVAX Facility in its mission to deliver safe and effective vaccines against COVID-19 to all countries and quickly and equitably. We reinforce our commitment to support the vaccination campaign and contain the spread of the virus, in close cooperation with all partners. ”

The World Bank, Represented by Eneida Fernandes said, “This is an important day for Cabo Verde. With the arrival of the first batch of vaccines and the country’s track record in vaccination campaigns, the World Bank is convinced that the country will be able to roll-out its COVID vaccine campaign swiftly and promote resilient recovery for the people of Cabo Verde. Together with partners, the World Bank is stepping up its support through the [Cabo Verde COVID-19 Emergency Response Project](https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P173857) to help purchase and distribute vaccines, and strengthen vaccination systems”.

According to the national authorities, vaccination will begin in the 18 of March and will be implemented in a phased manner, depending on the distribution by different priority groups, such as health professionals, chronically ill and people over 60 years, professionals working in airports and ports, in the tourism sector, teachers and support staff in schools, National Police, Armed Forces, Civil Protection and Fire Service professionals. According to the national vaccination plan, health professionals, who are on the front line, will be the first to be vaccinated.

For several months, COVAX partners have been supporting the government in its preparedness efforts for this moment and several key steps have been taken, including confirming national regulatory authorization criteria related to delivered vaccines, compensation agreements, national vaccination plan, as well as other logistical factors such as special import authorizations. COVAX partners have also being collaborating with the preparation of the country readiness, technical and multisectoral coordination, the development of the National Vaccination Plan, support for cold chain infrastructure, as well as the storage of syringes and safety boxes for disposal, masks, gloves and other equipment to ensure that there is sufficient equipment for health professionals to start vaccinating priority groups follow-up and surveillance of adverse effects after the injection, among other.

It should be noted that COVAX Facility is co-led by GAVI - The Vaccine Alliance, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), in partnership with UNICEF, the World Bank, and is part of the COVID-19 Tool Access Accelerator (ACT), an innovative global collaboration to accelerate development, production and equitable access to testing COVID-19 treatments and vaccines ensuring that low- and middle-income countries can also have access to vaccines with the aim of leaving no one behind.

COVAX has built a diverse portfolio of vaccines suitable for a variety of configurations and populations and is on track to meet its goal of delivering at least 2 billion doses of vaccine to the initiative's participating countries worldwide by 2021, including about 1.3 billion donor-funded doses to the 92 low-income countries that are part of the COVAX Initiative.