



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND MENTAL HYGIENE  
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Commissioner

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## HEALTH AUTHORITIES FROM EIGHT COUNTRIES JOIN CITY TO CALL ON G20 NATIONS TO DISTRIBUTE COVID-19 VACCINES EQUITABLY

*Only 10% of the population in low-income countries has received one dose of the vaccine*

*Health authorities from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, France, Spain, United Kingdom, United States, and Uruguay join in calling upon the G20 to take urgent action to ensure vaccination access in the Global South*

**March 14, 2022** – The Health Department and Mayor’s Office for International Affairs today announced that local health authorities from eight countries around the world have signed on to a [letter](#) calling on G20 nations to take immediate action on global COVID-19 vaccine equity. To date, there has not been enough collective action to improve vaccine access in the Global South. As of February 2022, only 10% of the population in low-income communities has received one dose compared to nearly 80% in high-income countries.

“The time to act on global vaccine inequity is now, in order to prevent further, unnecessary suffering and death from this pandemic,” said **43<sup>rd</sup> Health Commissioner Dr. Dave A. Chokshi**. “New York City is a global city, and what impacts the world inevitably comes to impact us. We’ve seen this time and again, particularly with COVID-19 variants, which will continue to arise if we do not extend the power of vaccination to all countries. I thank my fellow health leaders who stand in solidarity as we face this urgent need together.”

“As we have seen time and again with this pandemic, and with those before it, a ripple in one part of the world turns quickly into a tidal wave in New York City,” said **44<sup>th</sup> Health Commissioner Dr. Ashwin Vasan**. “If COVID-19 has taught us anything, it is that we are all connected in a global community and thus our ongoing pandemic response demands global solidarity. We have a choice: come together to advance swift and equitable vaccination for the world, or continue to face a scale of human suffering and loss that is entirely preventable. Our health, mental health, and our futures are dependent on choosing correctly, right now.”

“The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted our global connection and our need to collaborate,” said **Edward Mermelstein, Commissioner, NYC Mayor’s Office for International Affairs**. “We are grateful to all the health leaders that have joined this movement on behalf of their local governments. Together, we can ensure that everyone is safe and healthy.”

The letter represents a call to action on behalf of municipal leaders from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, France, Spain, United Kingdom, United States, and Uruguay. The letter, which was published in the New York Times and 11 major international publications, outlines specific actions G20 can take now to prevent further suffering and needless death:

Increase access to accurate information about vaccination and prevent the spread of misinformation about COVID-19 vaccines by:

- Holding social media/tech companies and anti-vaccination groups accountable for the spread of misinformation.
- Prioritizing partnerships with trusted community groups to build vaccine confidence, support navigation to vaccination sites, and counter misinformation.
- Investing in national and global public health messaging efforts to encourage vaccination.

Increase equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines by:

- Ensuring that countries in the Global South have appropriate vaccine infrastructure, particularly around cold chain maintenance and that donations do not create an unfair burden based on expiration dates.
- Adjusting G20 country vaccine donations to COVAX based on demand in recipient countries.
- Committing to producing at least 15 billion mRNA doses in the next 6 months, including investing in manufacturing capacity in the Global South.
- Following through on previous commitments to share intellectual property and expertise to enable more Global South countries to manufacture vaccines at home.
- Publicly voicing support for the WTO Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) waiver.

“Local governments are the first link to communities and must promote equity,” said **Aissata M.B. Camara, Deputy Commissioner, Policy and Strategic Initiatives, NYC Mayor’s Office for International Affairs**. “New York City is proud of the strong relationships we have with cities around the world. We look forward to continuing to share knowledge and information to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus and future pandemics.”

“Wealthier countries have effectively fought infectious diseases for decades, and in the past, we have seen those countries, including the United States, lose focus on combatting diseases like tuberculosis and malaria despite massive negative impacts in low- and middle- income countries,” said **Health Department Chief Medical Officer and Deputy Commissioner Dr. Michelle Morse**. “Globally, we are more interdependent now than ever, and we have an opportunity to break the cycle of inequity. Global vaccine equity is a moral imperative and now is the time for definitive G20 action to ensure that goal.”

To join in support of the global call to action, public health leaders from around the world can [fill out a form](#) on the Health Department website.

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