

Senegal, EU and US sign deal for new vaccine-production plant

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Senegal, the EU, the United States, several European governments, and other partners, signed an accord in the capital Dakar on Friday to finance vaccine production in the West African state.

The move comes amid a shortages of jabs and a third wave of coronavirus infections sweeping Africa, which has highlighted the lack of vaccination-production facilities on the continent.

Ninety-nine percent of vaccines used in Africa are imported, according to a joint statement from the Senegalese government and the European Union.

The new financing deal is intended to kickstart [vaccine production](#) at the Pasteur Institute in Dakar, the statement explained, lowering the dependence on imports.

Senegal's Economy Minister Amadou Hott was quoted in the statement as saying that the new production site will lay the foundation for "pharmaceutical and medical sovereignty".

It will also "increase access to affordable vaccines in Africa, and enable vaccine production to rapidly respond to new pandemics," he added.

Construction of the plant is expected to start later this year, according to the statement, which added that 25 million [vaccine](#) doses are due to be produced each month by the end of 2022.

The European Commission, European Investment Bank, the World Bank, as well as the United States, France, Germany and Belgium will fund the project, alongside the Senegalese government and other donors.

Germany will contribute 20 million euros (\$23.7 million) towards the new plant.

It is not yet clear how much other donors will contribute. However, several donors had already contributed millions towards a feasibility study.

At a press conference in Dakar on Friday, European Commissioner Thierry Breton said the project should cost around 200 million euros (\$237 million) in total.

The plant will be situated in the new city of Diamniadio, about 30 kilometres (18 miles) from Dakar, and employ about 300 people, he added.

"This is a historic day," Breton said, referring to the signing.

With some 5.8 million reported COVID-19 cases and around 149,000 deaths among its nearly 1.3 billion people, Africa is the world's least-affected continent after Oceania, according to an AFP tally.

A third wave of virus infections is currently sweeping the continent, raising fears about the consequences of a lack of vaccines.

Vaccination rates remain sluggish, with only about two percent of the African population fully vaccinated.

Matshidiso Moeti, the World Health Organization's regional director for Africa, warned on Thursday that cases are doubling every 18 days.

"Africa has just marked the continent's most dire pandemic week ever," she said.

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