

Worst of COVID-19 is yet to come for Africa: WHO

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Africa has just lived through its most devastating week of the pandemic, but the worst is yet to come as the third wave gathers pace on the continent, the World Health Organization said Thursday.

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

But the worst is yet to come as the fast-moving third wave continues to gain speed and new ground," said Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, the WHO's regional director for Africa.

Cases are doubling every 18 days, compared with every 21 days only a week ago, she said during a virtual press conference, adding that "the end to this precipitous rise is still weeks away."

Coronavirus cases have been rising in Africa since the start of the third wave on the continent on May 3. During the week ending July 4, more than 251,000 new COVID-19 cases were recorded on the continent, a 20% increase over the previous week and a 12% jump from the previous January peak.

Sixteen African countries are now seeing a resurgence of the virus, with the more contagious Delta strain detected in 10 of them.

South Africa is the worst-hit country in Africa, with new daily infections hitting record highs of 26,000 cases over the weekend, fuelled by the Delta variant.

Vaccination rates remain sluggish, with only 16 million people, 2% of the African population, fully vaccinated.

But Moeti said there was some room for optimism because vaccine deliveries were picking up after grinding to a near halt in May and early June.

In the past two weeks, more than 1.6 million doses were delivered to Africa through the Covax scheme, which was set up to ensure equitable distribution of vaccines to poorer countries.

A US shipment of 20 million Johnson & Johnson and Pfizer-BioNTech

is due to arrive soon, to be distributed to 49 countries. Donations from Norway and Sweden are due to follow.

"Our appeals for 'we first and not me first' are finally turning talk into action. But the deliveries can't come soon enough because the third wave looms large across the [continent](#)," she said.

Africa has so far received 66 million doses and has administered 50 million of them.

Moeti urged governments to expand vaccination sites and take other measures to take advantage of the vaccine deliveries when they come.

According to latest figures, Africa has officially registered 5,730,638 cases and 147,125 deaths from COVID-19.

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