

WHO slams 'shocking disparity' in access to vaccines

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The World Health Organization hit out on Tuesday at the "shocking disparity" in access to coronavirus vaccines, with only four countries in Africa able to meet their inoculation targets so far.

"Globally, 140 countries have vaccinated at least 10 percent of their

populations," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told the opening of an online meeting of African health ministers.

"But in our continent, only four countries have been able to reach that target, owing to the shocking disparity in access to vaccines."

The WHO secretary-general said that "the [vaccine](#) crisis illustrates the fundamental weakness at the root of the pandemic: the lack of global solidarity and sharing".

And that included the sharing of information and data, [biological samples](#), resources, technology and tools, he said.

Covax, the global programme co-sponsored by the WHO that tries to secure vaccines for nations with less financial clout, has delivered 40 million doses to African countries, according to WHO Africa regional director, Matshidiso Moeti.

"This is a small fraction of the doses needed across the continent to protect people from severe COVID-19 illness and death," she said.

"We deeply regret the delays and difficulties in keeping to agreements due to unforeseen factors as the pandemic unfolded. We have indeed learned many lessons."

Moeti said that the COVID-19 pandemic "presents both an opportunity and a stark warning of the need to re-think systems that reinforce injustices, and to invest more in building a healthier, fairer world."

The three-day meeting of the WHO's regional committee for Africa, is also scheduled to discuss other diseases, such as polio, cervical cancer, tuberculosis, AIDS, STDs, hepatitis and meningitis.

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