



*In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

**Opening remarks to the**

**INTERCOUNTRY TRAINING OF TRAINERS WORKSHOP ON  
PANDEMIC INFLUENZA VACCINE DEPLOYMENT GUIDELINES**

**Rabat, Morocco, 12–15 July 2009**

Dear colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this Intercountry workshop for Training of Trainers on Pandemic Influenza Vaccine Deployment Guidelines. This workshop comes as part of the global and regional efforts towards mitigation and containment of the influenza pandemic, in order to ensure optimum national capacity and preparedness for timely application of all specific containment measures.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to the Government of Morocco for hosting this workshop. I would like also to express my deep appreciation to our colleagues from WHO headquarters for supporting this workshop and for their unlimited support to the Eastern Mediterranean Region. I would also like to welcome the national EPI managers, the focal points for the influenza pandemic preparedness plan and colleagues from WHO country offices who are participating in this workshop. All success on the ground that can be achieved is heavily dependent on your commitment and relentless efforts to give this emergency situation the priority it deserves.

Dear colleagues,

The world is now at the start of the 2009 influenza pandemic. In late April, WHO announced the emergence of a novel influenza A virus H1N1, a new strain that has not circulated previously in humans. Since then, this novel virus has been steadily spreading from one country to another. So far, around 70 000 confirmed cases have been reported in more than 100 countries, including 313 cases from 15 countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region. On the basis of available evidence, the scientific criteria for an influenza pandemic have been met and accordingly, influenza pandemic phase 6 was declared by WHO.

In fact, influenza pandemics, whether moderate or severe, have always been remarkable events because of the almost universal susceptibility of the world's population to infection. Fortunately, this pandemic was detected at the very beginning. No previous pandemic has been detected so early or watched so closely. This places us in a stronger position for better preparedness and more effective action.

Dear Colleagues,

You will certainly agree with me that immunization is one of the most efficacious, most cost-effective and safest of public health interventions. Vaccines continue to have tremendous effect on saving millions of lives from endemic and epidemic diseases each year. Smallpox eradication, the great progress towards polio eradication, the drastic reduction in measles morbidity and mortality, the thousands of lives saved each year from seasonal influenza, as well as the efficient control of meningococcal meningitis epidemics, are irrefutable proof of the value of immunization. Among all the recommended public health measures to contain pandemic influenza, immunization stands as the most valuable way to protect people from getting the disease. Therefore, WHO has been in close dialogue with influenza vaccine manufacturers to ensure the largest possible supply of a safe effective pandemic vaccine as soon as possible. During the past several months, we have worked together closely on development of national pandemic preparedness plans. Today, we are here for training of trainers from all countries on the guidelines for the deployment of a pandemic influenza vaccine, with the overall goal of supporting your government's efforts to prepare a plan for the deployment of a pandemic influenza vaccine or to improve the current deployment plan.

Dear Colleagues,

A strong national immunization programme is imperative, not only for ensuring high routine immunization coverage and expanding immunization outside infancy but for facing the increasing threats of epidemic-prone disease that can be prevented through vaccination as well. You will learn during the course of this training that it is not enough to get the pandemic vaccine to any country. Equally important is to ensure that the national immunization programme, with all its components, is capable of deploying the vaccine to the end user in the appropriate time and of ensuring the quality and safety of the vaccine.

This workshop is just the beginning. You, the concerned programme managers and the future trainers, have a major responsibility ahead of you. You will be responsible for

developing the national capacity for deployment of pandemic influenza vaccine and ensuring the strength of all components of the national EPI to be capable of meeting this challenge.

Before I end, I urge you to obtain the maximum benefit of this training workshop through sound discussion, exchange of experience and optimum planning. I wish you a successful workshop and pleasant stay in Rabat.