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Enabel organises first round table on local vaccine production and distribution in Africa

Brussels, 30 April 2020 | On the initiative of Minister of Development Cooperation Meryame Kitir, the Belgian development agency Enabel is organising today the first Belgian roundtable on the role our country can play in scaling up the production capacity of vaccines, medicines and medical equipment in Africa. The roundtable brings together representatives of Belgian public services, universities and research centres, civil society organisations and companies to devise structural solutions to make vaccines accessible in Africa.



The roundtable takes place ahead of a European meeting next week to discuss the European initiative on local production and global access to vaccines and medicines. The initiative also echoes the call of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who stresses the importance of countries working together to ensure adequate supplies, smooth distribution of vaccines and high vaccine preparedness.

The coronary crisis will only be over when everyone is safe and therefore when vaccines are available for everyone. But at the current vaccination rate, it would take five years to vaccinate 75% of the world's population. Africa imports 94% of its medicines from abroad. It therefore makes sense to allow for the local production of medicines: health care will be strengthened and countries will be better able to cope with pandemics. But it will also stimulate the local economy and increase employment; it will improve economic, diplomatic and scientific relations between countries.

Belgian international cooperation has been working for decades with various partner countries in Africa to strengthen their health systems. This means that those health systems must also be able to cope with pandemics such as COVID-19 and must be able to purchase, distribute and why not: produce their own vaccines. What can and should Belgium do to help make that possible? With what technical expertise can Belgium make a meaningful contribution to the European approach to enable the production and distribution of vaccines in Africa? How can Belgium contribute to the creation of universal health care, to stronger health systems in Africa?

Managing Director Jean Van Wetter of the Belgian development agency Enabel welcomes the initiative: "It is an ambitious programme, but it fits perfectly with the strategic vision of Enabel and our role as "enabler" to bring together the key players and the expertise so that we can tackle these shared challenges together with our partners."

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