



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Opening Remarks for Minister Phaahla

7th ACT-A Facilitation Council

15 October 2021

- Thank you, Dr Tedros.
- Today I am speaking to you on behalf of both Norway and South Africa.
- Due to the recent change of government in Norway a political representative was not available for this meeting.
- I would like to take this opportunity to thank my former Norwegian Co-Chair Mr Dag-Inge Ulstein for his role in Co-Chairing this Facilitation Council. He has been a strong supporter of the ACT-Accelerator.
- As we come together today, the eyes of world appear to be shifting away from the threat of COVID-19 – and there is even a palpable feeling in some countries that this pandemic is behind us. But this is not the case.
- As we will hear during the course of today's meeting the pandemic is not over and we still have much work to do to end the acute phase.
- Today is also a time for us to take stock, the ACT-Accelerator Strategic Review confirmed that ACT-A has played an additive and important role in accelerating the development and delivery of critical tools to fight COVID-19, and has responded to country needs.
- The Review recognized the successes of the initiative including that:
 - COVAX has contributed to access to vaccines, but have not met the 10% target by September, affecting supply of vaccines for those in Africa and the Middle East.

- The diagnostics pillar supported the development of reliable and affordable rapid tests, making them accessible to L/MICs, and
- US\$ 3.6 billion has been channeled through the Global Fund Covid-19 Response Mechanism (C19RM) to countries for procurement of PPE, diagnostics, and therapeutics
- The Review contained some important recommendations and learnings – including the extension of the ACT-Accelerator's mandate into 2022; greater emphasis on downstream delivery; a better definition for the work of the Health Systems Connector; better engagement and communication with countries; - and most pertinent to our business here today, the need to reaffirm the role and function of the Facilitation Council.
- This meeting marks a crucial moment for the ACT-Accelerator, and for us, the Facilitation Council.
- We need to respond to the recommendation of the Review, and look to strengthen our mandate and aspirations, to play a key role in ensuring that the work of this initiative remains high on the agenda of countries around the world.
- The new Strategy and Budget, whose draft we will consider today, sets out clearly what is needed to enable this initiative to achieve the ambitious global targets that have been internationally endorsed.
- If we are serious about ensuring 70% vaccination coverage by the 77th UNGA next year;
- If we are serious about getting testing rates up to 100 per 100,000 of population;
- If we are serious about every COVID-19 patient having access to medical oxygen and treatments;
- If we are serious about healthcare workers being able to access the PPE they need – then we must support the new Strategy and Budget of the ACT-Accelerator.
- Without considerable financial commitments from countries, this plan will not succeed.

- It also requires active participation, decision-making and accountability for funds received to the ACT-A Council.
- I will leave you with that thought as we go into our important discussions.
- Now, it is my pleasure to hand the floor to John Ryan, Director at the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, European Commission and the co-host for the Council.