



The vaccine
ecosystem

The Economist Group

Consensus Statement of the Advisory Council





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The Economist Group established an Advisory Council composed of global experts with diverse insights and perspectives to support The Vaccine Ecosystem Initiative. The first meeting was convened virtually on 4 March 2021.

The consensus statement, below, was unanimously ratified by Advisory Council members on 27 May 2021.

The consensus statement defines the mission and objectives of The Economist Group's Vaccine Ecosystem Initiative as we work to build a dynamic, sustainable vaccine ecosystem for the future.

Statement of purpose

The Economist Group's Vaccine Ecosystem Initiative envisions a world in which vaccines are used to safeguard good health and wellbeing to benefit people of all ages worldwide. The Initiative seeks to improve universal, equitable and sustainable protection for everyone against current and future diseases that are amenable to prevention or treatment through vaccination, in order to enhance health, development and global prosperity.

The Initiative endorses a systematic, multifaceted, comprehensive and international approach to all aspects of the vaccine ecosystem, including improved preparedness throughout the ecosystem, encompassing vaccine research and development, manufacture, procurement, deployment and uptake. We encompass a broad and diverse set of stakeholders to identify comprehensive solutions for harnessing the full potential of vaccines for the benefit of all.

History has shown that a crisis can serve as a catalyst for innovation and progress. The Second World War led to the establishment of the United Nations, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic facilitated the creation of The Global Fund. While we recognise the detrimental impact the pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus has had on people and economies around the world, it has provided a unique opportunity to focus international attention on the critical importance of vaccination as a fundamental underpinning of modern societies. This pandemic has starkly demonstrated the close link between science, health protection, One Health, human capital, economic growth and global security. It has brought a wide array of stakeholders together in ways not previously attempted and has powerfully demonstrated the need to invest in, and apply, the best possible science and evidence to the challenges facing us. This momentum must be harnessed in order to drive meaningful and enduring change, ensuring that the current and future benefits of scientific innovation and advancement can reach across the globe.

The speed with which virologists, vaccinologists, engineers, manufacturers, regulators and so many others across many sectors have collaborated to build partnerships and promote



technology transfers, and escalated capacity to create and produce multiple efficacious covid-19 vaccines, is remarkable and unprecedented. Beyond the laboratory, this required stakeholders at every level to find innovative solutions and cooperate in ways that have transcended traditional modes of working. In many instances, it has required greater partnership between sectors and between countries and considerable financial investment by a number of governments, pharmaceutical companies and international agencies and foundations.

This unprecedented level of collaboration and investment has led to the fastest development and deployment of vaccines ever seen:



The first covid-19 vaccine received Emergency Use Authorization from the US Food and Drug Administration within 326 days of publication of the SARS-CoV-2 genetic sequence.



In 2019, before covid-19, global vaccine production was estimated to stand at 5.5 billion doses for all vaccines. The capacity to produce covid-19 vaccines, alone, is estimated to reach 2.2 billion doses by the end of May 2021 and an astounding estimate of 11 billion doses by the end of 2021.



The first multilateral end-to-end global vaccine collaboration mechanism (COVAX) shipped the first COVAX doses of the covid-19 vaccine to Ghana less than 80 days after the initial vaccination programmes had begun in high-income countries.

These remarkable records have been achieved because of the unprecedented investment in the development and production of covid-19 vaccines and a viable vaccine ecosystem that has already contributed vaccines that protect against 28 diseases, and has more than 200 vaccine candidates under development against other diseases.

However, the pandemic response has also laid bare important challenges that emphasise the need for broader strengthening of the vaccine ecosystem. This requires us to do the following:



Enable sustainable immunisation programmes by strengthening – and more effectively aligning – economic and fiscal policies and decision-making to recognise the full societal value of vaccines and vaccination as an investment and a driver of economic growth and development.



Identify and mitigate policies that threaten universal and global equitable access and protection from vaccine-preventable diseases and fail to recognise the interconnectedness of the vaccine ecosystem, including vaccine nationalism and hoarding.



Reduce morbidity and mortality from vaccine-preventable diseases for everyone across their life-course by accelerating the introduction of new and existing vaccines, notably for older adults, and addressing disparities and inequities in access between countries as well as within national borders.



Increase the resilience and responsiveness of the vaccine ecosystem to ensure supply meets demand by streamlining regulatory policies, by strengthening global supply chains of inputs and end products, by increasing the size of the skilled workforce required, and by investing in and leveraging new models to maintain necessary manufacturing capacity.



Strengthening the role of immunisation within primary healthcare and establishing vaccination as a foundational pillar for universal health coverage and sustainable development.



Leverage digital technologies and innovations to enhance data systems that improve delivery, management and uptake of vaccinations and reduce the vast and enduring disparities in vaccination coverage both between and within countries.



Build global and local preparedness measures to counter pandemic threats by strengthening: early-warning disease surveillance systems, control measures to stop zoonotic transmission of disease, mechanisms for sharing pathogen data to facilitate vaccine development, and an infrastructure for rapid deployment of vaccinations to improve health security worldwide.



Equip trusted leaders to build confidence among individuals and communities to address vaccine hesitancy and anti-vaccination disinformation campaigns and increase uptake to achieve community immunity from vaccine-preventable diseases.



Increase the number of diseases that can be prevented through vaccination through global and national policies and partnerships that foster breakthroughs and incremental innovation, while recognising the risks and challenges of research and development across the vaccine value chain.



Encourage strong leadership across sectors to maintain the prioritisation of and investment in the vaccine ecosystem today and into the future.

Guiding principles

There is an urgent need to overcome these challenges to ensure a rapid and equitable global recovery from the present pandemic and to strategically safeguard optimal universal protection against future vaccine-preventable and newly emerging vaccine-amenable threats.

The following principles underpin our approach to fostering a sustainable vaccine ecosystem:

- 1 | We recognise the full value of vaccines and vaccination across the life-course and their potential to address infectious diseases that threaten global economic and health security.
- 2 | We are committed to equitable access and to ensuring everyone is fully protected by immunisation, regardless of their location, age, socioeconomic status or gender-related barriers. This includes recognition of the significant unmet needs of low-and middle-income countries.
- 3 | We will evaluate the vaccine ecosystem holistically and comprehensively, from preparedness and development to distribution and uptake. This includes recognising the critical role of stakeholders from all disciplines and sectors across the vaccine ecosystem and their respective motivations, concerns, contributions and challenges, and we will work in partnership with all relevant stakeholders to develop, maximise and implement solutions.
- 4 | We will apply a multidisciplinary, integrative approach to strengthening the vaccine ecosystem, recognising the interconnectedness of the vaccine ecosystem with primary care, public health and One Health approaches.
- 5 | We will examine and put forth recommendations to strengthen the vaccine ecosystem, thus encouraging strategic collaboration and coordination at global, regional and national levels – including addressing barriers to sharing animal and human pathogens, and their associated information – that arises from national legislation on access and benefit sharing, as well as supporting readiness and resilience in immunisation programmes.
- 6 | We recognise and will incorporate the link between humans and animals – both in the zoonotic transmission of disease and in the development and implementation of preventive and therapeutic solutions – to address disease in both humans and animals.



Our activities

As thought-leaders, we have a unique place in communicating knowledge, increasing dialogue and building consensus. We now have an unprecedented opportunity to promote meaningful change that can get to the very heart of improving global health in a sustainable manner. In the months to come, we aim to produce a series of evidence-based research outputs, policy reports and policy briefing papers that will help to build consensus across a wide and diverse group of stakeholders in public and private sectors, policy-makers and government organisations, health professionals, academic and public health experts, and NGOs. Through our research, and our webinars, presentations at conferences and events, our goal is to support an open exchange of ideas and evidence-driven understanding that allows us to better meet the challenges of today and not squander the opportunity to build a dynamic and resilient vaccine ecosystem for the future.



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