



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

**Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **MINISTER OF FOREIGN AND CARICOM AFFAIRS DISCUSSES DONATION OF COVID-19 VACCINES WITH US OFFICIALS**

**PORT OF SPAIN: 4<sup>TH</sup> JUNE, 2021**

Senator the Honourable Dr. Amery Browne, Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs held discussions with Mr. Juan Sebastian Gonzalez, Special Assistant to the Honourable Joseph R. Biden, President of the United States of America, and Senior Director for the Western Hemisphere at the White House. Also on the call was Dr. Maureen Bartee, Senior Advisor and Director for Emerging Biological Threats at the National Security Council.

The discussion was a follow-up to the meeting held between Dr. the Honourable Keith C. Rowley, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and Dr. Elizabeth Cameron, Special Assistant to President Biden, and Senior Director for Global Health Security and Biodefense, National Security Council Staff in the White House on 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2021, whose outreach was a direct outcome of the issues raised by the Prime Minister with US Congresswoman Maxine Waters on 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, regarding access to COVID-19 vaccines for CARICOM countries and other related matters.

Minister Browne opened the meeting with an expression of gratitude on behalf of the Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago to the Honourable Kamala Harris, Vice-President of the United States of America and her office, for the telephone call that she placed to him on 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2021.

During the discussion, Minister Browne sought specifics on the recent announcement by the United States Government that it would be allocating 80 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to the global fight against the pandemic. Mr. Gonzalez informed that the vaccines to be allocated would be distributed through the COVAX facility primarily as well as through other initiatives.

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He indicated further that the vaccines would be sourced from multiple manufacturers, with the first allocation of 25 million doses (out of the total 80 million doses) envisaged to take place before the end of June, 2021.

In response to Minister Browne's direct advocacy on behalf of Trinidad and Tobago and CARICOM countries which are experiencing a significant and troubling surge in COVID-19 cases, Mr. Gonzalez indicated that these concerns will be taken into account and the final quantities of vaccines to be allocated to CARICOM and the Caribbean would be determined in collaboration with the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA).

Mr. Gonzalez emphasized that this allocation by the United States Government as it sought to lead the global charge against the COVID-19 pandemic, was free of cost and obligation. He also assured that there would be additional global vaccine rollouts once surplus doses were obtained.

During the meeting, there was consensus on the important role to be played by CARPHA in assisting with the urgent vaccine rollout in the CARICOM Region.

The meeting concluded with a commitment that there would be further direct communication from the White House to the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs in the near future to respond to the questions raised during the discussion.

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