



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs

MEDIA RELEASE

TT SUPPORTS US DECISION TO HOLD GLOBAL COVID-19 SUMMIT

PORT OF SPAIN: 10TH SEPTEMBER, 2021

Prime Minister Dr. the Honourable Keith Rowley welcomes the initiative of United States President Joseph Biden to hold a Global COVID-19 Summit in recognition, among other concerns, of the danger posed by many of the world's citizens not being vaccinated.

Prime Minister Rowley pointed out that this is solidly aligned to the position of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The Prime Minister, as CARICOM Chairman from 1st January 2021 to 30th June 2021, convened a Special Meeting of CARICOM Heads of Government early in his tenure on 12th January to address COVID-19 Vaccine Availability as one of three high priority matters.

A key outcome was a call by CARICOM for a Global Summit in the context of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) ACT-A Facilitation Council to discuss equitable access and distribution of the COVID-19 vaccines.

In the Statement issued after the Meeting, CARICOM Heads of Government also registered their deep concern at the "current prospect of inequitable access to vaccines to address the pandemic, especially for frontline workers and vulnerable populations" and highlighted that "small states will find it difficult to compete in the market place to ensure equitable access for vaccines." CARICOM stressed that all countries are vulnerable and should work together given the transmissibility of the virus.

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Prime Minister Rowley sought support for a Global Summit from the Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, to whom he wrote in January 2021 given the prevailing situation where those with greater resources were able to obtain vaccines, thereby placing small states, such as those in the Caribbean, at a disadvantage.

His call for a Global Summit was reiterated at the 32nd Inter-Sessional Meeting of CARICOM Heads of Government at the end of February, chaired by Trinidad and Tobago. By 4th March, Prime Minister Rowley wrote to President Biden, and to the leaders of other developed nations on the issue. He took the opportunity to express appreciation to CARICOM's International Development Partners for the financial support to the COVAX Facility which would provide developing countries with 20% of their inoculation needs. He cited the science-led key objective of attaining herd immunity and underscored that what was desperately needed was "easier access to equitably-priced vaccines in sufficient quantities, and without condition on procurement being imposed by suppliers, in order to ensure the safety of peoples of all nations."

In March, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), under the presidency of Mexico, joined CARICOM's call for a Global Summit stating "We are convinced that the pandemic caused by COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of maintaining a strong, united and supportive region, where no country is excluded from universal, fair, equitable and timely access to medicines, vaccines and medical supplies. Therefore, Mexico joins the call made by the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) to hold a Global Summit, within the framework of the World Health Organization, to address the urgency of having equitable access to this vaccine."

Accordingly, Prime Minister Rowley looks forward to collaborating with other global leaders at the Global COVID-19 Summit and to reaching agreement on measures critical to sustaining the lives and livelihoods of persons in all countries.

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