
01-05-2020 | Edited NewsCOVID-19

Shotlist

1. Wide shot: exterior, Place des Nations, Geneva

2. SOUNDbite (EN) – Marixie Mercado, UNICEF Spokesperson: “As of today (May 1), dozens of countries are at risk of stock-out due to delayed vaccine shipments. At most risk are 26 countries that are difficult to reach due to limited commercial and cargo options. Among these, at least five countries experienced measles outbreaks in 2019 and many more remain at risk”.


4. SOUNDbite (EN) Marixie Mercado, UNICEF Spokesperson: “Countries with limited resources will struggle to pay these higher prices, leaving children vulnerable to vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles and polio”.

5. Wide shot: UN Geneva with flag alley

6. SOUNDbite (EN) Marixie Mercado, UNICEF Spokesperson: “Disruptions in routine immunization, particularly in countries with weak health systems, could lead to disastrous outbreaks in 2020 and well beyond”.

7. Medium shot: UN Geneva with flag alley

8. **SOUNDBITE (EN)** Marixie Mercado, UNICEF Spokesperson: “The extended delays in shipments also pose a huge risk to manufacturers, who must store the excess vaccine stocks, and may be required to postpone future production if their warehouse storage space is exceeded.”

9. Wide shot: Flags in front of UN Geneva

10. **SOUNDBITE (EN)** Marixie Mercado, UNICEF Spokesperson: “UNICEF is appealing to governments, the private sector, the airline industry, and others, to free up freight space at affordable cost for these life-saving vaccines. And to work with us to find ways around the transport disruptions we face. Children’s lives are at stake”.

11. Medium shot, UN flag at UN, Geneva.
UNICEF calls for support to unblock massive backlog in vaccine shipments

UNICEF is calling for support to unblock a massive backlog in vaccine shipments due to unprecedented logistical constraints related to COVID-19 lockdowns in some countries.

Speaking at a virtual press conference at the UN in Geneva, UNICEF’s spokesperson Marixie Mercado said that “as of today (May 1), dozens of countries are at risk of stock-out due to delayed vaccine shipments”. She added that “at most risk are 26 countries that are difficult to reach due to limited commercial and cargo options. Among these, at least five countries experienced measles outbreaks in 2019 and many more remain at risk”.

Since the week of March 22, UNICEF has seen a 70-80 per cent reduction of planned vaccine shipments due to the dramatic decline in commercial flights and limited availability of charters.

Compounding the challenge is the exorbitant cost of securing flights, with freight rates at 100-200 percent above normal and charter flights even more costly. “Countries with limited resources will struggle to pay these higher prices, leaving children vulnerable to vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles and polio”, UNICEF’s spokesperson said.

In 2019, UNICEF procured 2.43 billion doses of vaccines for 100 countries, to reach approximately 45 per cent of all children below the age of five years.

UNICEF estimates that 20 million children below the age of one every year were dropping out of their measles and polio vaccines even before the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNICEF’s spokesperson warned that “disruptions in routine immunization, particularly in countries with weak health systems, could lead to disastrous outbreaks in 2020 and well beyond”.

The biggest part of vaccines currently not reaching countries, are intended for routine immunization programmes. Because of the delay, countries have been using buffer stocks. As transport challenges persist, countries are at increasing risk of a vaccine stock-out.

“The extended delays in shipments also pose a huge risk to manufacturers, who must store the excess vaccine stocks, and may be required to postpone future production if their warehouse storage space is exceeded”, Ms Mercado said.

UNICEF has been working with manufacturers and partners, including WHO, the vaccine alliance GAVI, PAHO and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to find solutions. However, many countries will require additional funding support.

“We are appealing to governments, the private sector, the airline industry, and others, to free up freight space at affordable cost for these life-saving vaccines and to work with us to find ways around the transport disruptions we face. Children’s lives are at stake”, said UNICEF’s spokesperson.