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Next Steps for Vaccine Access

The Malaysian Health Coalition (MHC) welcomes the decision for Malaysia to join the COVAX Facility. It is a platform led by the World Health Organisation (WHO), GAVI and Coalition of Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) with 172 participating countries. COVAX will give Malaysians the best chance of securing fair and equal access to the Covid-19 vaccine when one becomes available.

As next steps, we urge the following:

1. Include and inform the *Rakyat*

The government must keep the *Rakyat* included and informed about its plans to procure and then distribute vaccines for Malaysians. The COVAX Facility will allocate enough doses for only 20% of Malaysia's population in the first phase. Therefore, the government must publicise the criteria for which category of citizen receives the first doses of the vaccine. The criteria must be transparent, inclusive and non-paternalistic. It must achieve fairness and equality, and protect all residents of Malaysia. As the vaccine is a public good, the deliberations of the Cabinet Working Group on the Covid-19 Vaccine must be publicised.

2. Prepare the vaccine infrastructure

We must start preparing the mass vaccination program now. Firstly, the regulatory agencies of Malaysia must prepare for a robust, yet accelerated review of the vaccine when it is ready. Secondly, public communications for vaccine confidence must be effective in an era of misinformation, disinformation and anti-vaxxers. Thirdly, the Covid-19 mass vaccination program must not impact other vaccinations programs (like polio or HPV), and must be funded in sustainable ways. Fourthly, the logistics of vaccine delivery must be enhanced throughout all parts of Malaysia. Fifthly, discussions must begin on the vaccination of non-citizen residents of Malaysia, as a matter of public health. No one can be left behind when the Covid-19 vaccine is being administered, as a pandemic somewhere is a pandemic everywhere.

3. Strengthen our seat at the global table

The Covid-19 pandemic is now shifting to decisions made outside our national borders, like vaccines and travel bubbles. Malaysia must actively participate in these global discussions. We cannot only rely on our domestic public health system. Diverse representation in regional and global decision-making frameworks are crucial. We must rely on our current and former international civil servants, diplomats and international civil society leaders to make the Malaysian case for equitable access to all global public goods.

Now that we have announced our plans to acquire the Covid-19 vaccine, we need plans to deploy them in safe and equitable ways that inspire population confidence. Malaysia must increase transparency, prepare our vaccine infrastructure and strengthen our voice globally.

BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA.

Malaysian Health Coalition

Full Signature List on myhealthcoalition.org.

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