Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

World Health Organization

Responding to the Opposition to Vaccination

Yaren Öz

Opposition to Vaccination has been a major drawback in overcoming outbreaks and pandemics of Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPCs). This issue must be addressed properly and immediately as we are still in the midst of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Unfortunately, death tolls are rising rapidly, with an average of over 1000 deaths per day. Vaccinations can prevent deaths at a quite high rate and therefore we support mandatory vaccination and suppression of opposers who are a possible threat to vaccination of others.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been setting rules to be followed by the public to overcome outbreaks more efficiently as VPCs have become more common. These rules include mandatory vaccination, lockdowns and isolations. However as the rules get tougher the public starts having doubts, pushing themselves away from vaccination. As a result, false information starts spreading. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been extremely strict about the spread of such false information which has allowed us to focus on the safety concerns of our people and reassuring them of the vaccine’s safety.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in cooperation with the World Health Organization, has provided many countries with the medical support they have needed . We have consistently donated a total of USD 385 million. Countries such as Bangladesh, Iraq, Somalia, Syria and Yemen and many more have profited from these donations. We have also provided extensive healthcare services for Hajj Pilgrimage, currently providing with Covid-19 vaccines and other Covid-19 equipment. Services have been done to Polio eradication through Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Islamic Development Bank which has resulted in 55 of 57 member states of OIC becoming Polio-free. We wish to continue such aids, both in times of crises and regular times.

As the Director-General Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus said:‘This is a time for facts, not fear. This is a time for rationality, not rumors. This is a time for solidarity, not stigma.’ The Delegation of Saudi Arabia believes that Opposition to Vaccination originates from lack of knowledge or false information, mixed with negative emotions such as fear, anger and disappointment. It is crucial to eliminate these factors to build up trust with society. In order to do so, establishing a well coordinated organization to provide communication between opposers and bodies in charge is in order. We are confident that speaking to vocal opposers will help us gain a more in-depth knowledge about their refusal of vaccines. Once we learn more about their thought process, it would be easier to come up with ways to educate the public more efficiently.

In this meeting, we wish to address the recent issues and news of Opposition to Vaccination. With the Covid-19 Pandemic still going, there has been a significant amount of vocal vaccine opposers who in some cases have discouraged other members of the society from getting their vaccines. Because of such incidents, this topic must be discussed immediately and measurements shall be taken to prevent such incidents from repeating themselves.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hopes to come up with viable resolutions about the issues we have mentioned and hopes for this meeting to be an enjoyable one for all delegations present.