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Brussels,

Dear Minister,

With still rising numbers of cases<sup>1</sup> and health systems being under pressure in many Member States, the situation across the EU remains very precarious. I hope you found the “Staying safe from COVID-19 during winter” strategy<sup>2</sup> adopted on 2 December 2020 useful in designing your plans for this period. The prospect of safe and effective vaccines is the light emerging at the end of the tunnel.

Applications for conditional marketing authorisations for two vaccine candidates – produced by BioNTech-Pfizer and Moderna respectively – have been submitted to the European Medicines Agency, which is expected to deliver an opinion on their safety and effectiveness very soon. In case of a positive opinion, the Commission would swiftly issue a conditional marketing authorisation for these two vaccines.

In my letter to you on 4 November 2020, I urged you all to develop robust vaccination plans, considering key elements for successful implementation as outlined in the Commission Communication on vaccine deployment of 15 October 2020<sup>3</sup>. On the basis of your input, the ECDC, on 2 December 2020, published an overview of COVID-19 vaccination strategies and vaccine deployment plans in the EU/EEA and the UK<sup>4</sup>.

EU Health Ministers

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<sup>1</sup> On 13 December 2020, 14 959 949 COVID-19 cases had been reported in the EU/EEA and the UK. Please see <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/covid-19-pandemic> for updates.

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/preparedness\\_response/docs/covid-19\\_stayingsafe\\_communication\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/preparedness_response/docs/covid-19_stayingsafe_communication_en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/vaccination/docs/2020\\_strategies\\_deployment\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/vaccination/docs/2020_strategies_deployment_en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/overview-current-eu-eea-uk-plans-covid-19-vaccines>.  
Please note that the document will be updated.

According to the data from these surveys and the ISAA reports, many Member States have COVID-19 vaccination plans ready, having, in particular, identified priority groups such as older persons and health professionals. For the delivery of vaccines, many countries will make use of existing vaccination services, and some plan to recruit or train more staff. This is welcomed and positive progress.

Cold-chain equipment, should COVID-19 vaccines come with specific temperature requirements, and solid infrastructure and logistics will be essential elements in the rollout of the vaccines.

Vaccination is a national competence, but I wish to assure you that the Commission stands ready to support Member States, including with the actions outlined in my letter to Health Ministers of EU Health Ministers of 4 November 2020. Member States' vaccination plans are being continuously discussed in both the new EU Scientific Advice platform on COVID-19<sup>5</sup> and the Health Security Committee<sup>6</sup>, and a stress test of vaccination plans for Member States is scheduled for 15 December, to allow for mutual learning already now. I would like to ask any Member States that are encountering problems with readiness to receive the first deliveries of vaccines to get back to me.

I would like to thank you once more for your continued support in these difficult time for Europe. I count on your commitment to have robust vaccination plans ready before COVID-19 vaccines are rolled out across the European Union, and I take this opportunity to wish you a restful, albeit vigilant, Christmas break and a happy and healthy New Year 2021.

Yours sincerely,

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<sup>5</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/health/adviceplatform\\_covid19\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/health/adviceplatform_covid19_en)

<sup>6</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/health/hsc\\_covid19\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/health/hsc_covid19_en)