Merck’s Continued Commitment Towards Meeting HPV Vaccine Demand and Equitable Global Access

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Vaccines are one of the greatest public health success stories in history. Merck has played an important part in that story, and our commitment to help prevent diseases continues.

In recent years, countries around the world have enacted new or expanded immunization programs, which have created an unprecedented increase in global demand for vaccines, including many Merck vaccines. We are significantly ramping up our production capacity overall. In fact, to meet growing demand for Merck’s medicines and vaccines, and enable Merck to invest in R&D, Merck plans to invest $16 billion in capital projects over the next five years. Merck is already supplying vaccines at our highest-ever annual production rate – 170 million doses, almost double the number since 2010.

There has been an unprecedented increase in global demand for HPV vaccines in particular, as many countries have started or expanded existing HPV vaccination programs. In 2018, there was a significant inflection point—with demand for HPV vaccines more than doubling compared to 2017—after a 5-year period of stable demand.

The manufacturing process for HPV vaccines is very complex and lengthy, taking up to four years from start to finish, which means that Merck cannot quickly respond to sudden growing demand that exceeds available supply. However, Merck is making significant capital investments to further expand its internal manufacturing capacity, which includes maximizing the output of existing assets, as well as adding external manufacturing capacity to meet growing demand around the world. These investments in manufacturing are leading to an over 40% increase in doses distributed between 2017 and 2018 alone. Increasing global access to our HPV vaccines remains a top priority for Merck, and we are planning to more than triple global distribution from our 2017 base over the next five years, including almost doubling it over the next 2 years.

While expanding our supply capacity, we are also increasing distribution of our HPV vaccines even more to low and mid-income countries. In 2018, we have more than tripled our distribution of our HPV vaccine to Gavi*, compared to 2017. Gavi launches are a priority for Merck. Over the next three years, new Gavi country launches will represent the largest recipients of our increased production capacity.

As a health care leader, with a 100-year legacy in vaccines, coupled with expertise in research, development and manufacturing, we have demonstrated a commitment to impacting global public health through vaccines. Despite the inherent complexity, long lead times, and significant infrastructure required for vaccine development and manufacturing, our commitment to access to vaccines for all stakeholders—patients, health-care providers, NGOs, and government partners—remains firm. Merck’s continued fierce commitment, coupled with global partnerships, will enable equitable access to our HPV vaccines around the world.

*Gavi is an International Global Vaccine Alliance, that includes public and private sectors, with the shared goal of creating equal access to new and underused vaccines for children living in the world’s poorest countries.

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