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## **Press Release: Government of Japan enhances support to vaccine cold chain management in the Eastern Cape**

*Gqeberha, 30 September 2022:* A strong, effective and well-funded vaccination system helps protect children against childhood diseases and ensures that health systems are as prepared as possible for potential health crises. In addition, the evidence is clear that effective cold chain management makes the provisions of vaccines much more effective and far-reaching.

With this in mind, the Government of Japan has committed US\$2.1 million (ZAR32.7 million) to strengthen vaccine cold chain systems and to build capacity in promoting and rolling out vaccinations in various regions of South Africa, including in the Eastern Cape. These resources are going towards procuring additional cold chain equipment and to the training of frontline healthcare workers on effective vaccine management. It will also enable UNICEF South Africa, working with National and Provincial Departments of Health, to strengthen technical capacity to further scale-up COVID-19 and routine childhood vaccinations.

Addressing a handover ceremony in Gqeberha this week, Ambassador MARUYAMA Norio expressed delight that Japan's contribution had reached those in need. He also explained that Japan with "Last One Mile Support" project has been supporting cold chain system development to 77 countries and regions across the globe to ensure the delivery of vaccines to vaccination sites since early March 2021, and this project in South Africa is part of this.

Appreciating the partnership with the Government of Japan, the Deputy Director-General at the Eastern Cape Department of Health, Dr. L.L. Matiwane, explained that Remote Temperature Machine equipment is pivotal in the management of vaccines, especially against COVID-19. He noted that the vaccines are also important in the prevention of childhood diseases as part of the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI). "The role played by UNICEF in this partnership has made it possible for the province to achieve its targets of protecting the population against severe COVID-19 infection and we look forward to further collaboration in the areas of child and maternal health," added Dr Matiwane.

Acknowledging this support, UNICEF South Africa Representative, Ms. Christine Muhigana, noted that "This initiative is a powerful example of the meaningful difference that such partnerships can make to better the lives of vulnerable children in particular."

The resources provided by the Government of Japan will also strengthen broader child health services, including routine childhood immunizations that have dropped in coverage since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak.

### **For more information please contact:**

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