REMARKS BY JONAS GAHR STØRE, PRIME MINISTER, NORWAY AT THE

8TH ACT-ACCELERATOR FACILITATION COUNCIL

9 DECEMBER 2021

Mr President, Director-General, colleagues, and friends,

Taking stock of where we are, almost two years into the pandemic, is a sobering experience. The pandemic is far from over. More than 5 million deaths have been reported. And trillions of dollars have been spent on mitigation. Once again, we are seeing new variants emerge. This only serves to underscore the need for global cooperation and solidarity.

The pandemic has increased existing inequities. On the positive side; science has made great strides: We have developed effective vaccines. New treatments are being introduced. Rapid diagnostics make it possible to test, identify illness and reduce transmission. But the problem is: These tools are unevenly distributed. Unless these deep inequities are addressed, we will not see the end of the pandemic.

Inequities are leading to additional deaths, placing pressure on health systems, stifling economic recovery and widening economic inequality.

The ACT-Accelerator offers a comprehensive strategy. And it is capable of delivering tools to the areas where they are most needed. Through COVAX, ACT-A has already delivered more than 520 million vaccine doses to 144 countries, as well as 148 million tests. It has also increased supplies of oxygen, personal protective equipment, and treatments.

But to be able to continue its efforts, ACT-A needs to be fully funded. The ACT-A Strategic Plan and Budget for 2022 is our roadmap. A fully funded ACT-A can help achieve the target of 70% vaccination coverage in all countries by mid-2022. WHO has estimated that, if fully funded, ACT-A has the potential to save 5 million lives and prevent global economic losses of 5.3 trillion USD over the next five years.

Investing in the ACT-Accelerator is a political, economic, and global health security imperative.

We need 23.4 billion USD. And this is a matter of urgency. The cost of inaction will be much higher. If COVID-19 is left to spread unchecked anywhere, this will pose a threat everywhere. New virus variants will continue to emerge. They may lead to new waves of infection and render some of our existing COVID-19 tools obsolete.

Norway is committed to doing its part. My government has decided to contribute another 220 million USD to the new ACT-A budget. We call on other countries to invest their fair share.

Now is the time to live up to ACT-A's original purpose: To accelerate access to COVID-19 tools for everyone, everywhere. We must end the pandemic, save lives and facilitate global economic recovery.

We were not prepared for a pandemic. But we can be better prepared in the future. When we discuss pandemic preparedness and response, we must draw on lessons learned. We need to ensure a broader and longer-term perspective than the one we had when the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Friends,

We had all hoped that we had seen the beginning of the end. Instead, the pandemic has taken a new turn. But unlike at the start, we are now well equipped for battle. We have effective tools. And we have ACT-A to ensure that they are distributed to those who need them.

I am very pleased to be part of this collective effort and wish you every success moving forward.

Thank you.