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Sputnik V Backer Says Vaccine Hindered By 'Bureaucratic' WHO Approval Obstacles

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Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) CEO Kirill Dmitriyev. **rdif.ru**

Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine faces "purely bureaucratic" obstacles in the World Health Organization (WHO) approval process, its global backer said Thursday.

While Russia touted Sputnik V as the world's first registered Covid vaccine in August 2020, it has not yet been authorized for use by the WHO or the European Union. Its fast-track approval ahead of large-scale trials raised concerns, though research published in leading medical journal The Lancet declared it more than 91% effective against the original Covid-19 strain.

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Kirill Dmitriyev, the CEO of the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) which markets the jab worldwide, lauded Sputnik V's efficacy and safety proven in clinical trials.

“We see little reason for WHO to delay approval of the vaccine,” Dmitriyev told Argentina’s La Nacion daily in an interview.

“We understand that the remaining obstacles are minor and purely bureaucratic,” Dmitriyev said.

Sputnik V's WHO approval has been beset by delays relating to manufacturing infringements and incomplete data.

Dmitriyev however maintained that Russia’s Health Ministry has “a very positive partnership” with the global health watchdog.

Dmitriyev forecast that WHO approval would allow those vaccinated with Sputnik V to visit more countries in addition to the more than 100 countries that have already opened their doors to Sputnik-vaccinated travelers.

Russia’s flagship Covid-19 vaccine has been approved by regulators in 71 countries, including Argentina.

“We hope that WHO will follow suit in the near future,” Dmitriyev told La Nacion.

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Russia, meanwhile, has not approved any foreign-made vaccines for use within its borders.

Dmitriyev also predicted that Sputnik V’s developer, the state-run Gamaleya Center, will provide “several hundred million” boosters adapted to the new highly mutated Omicron coronavirus variant as early as Feb. 20, 2022.

More than 3 billion doses are expected to become available in 2022, he added.

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