# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 2853**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION IN INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 10 DECEMBER 2021 (INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 32)**

**Dr S S Thembekwayo (EFF) to ask the Minister of Health:**

Which recommendations have been made for children under the age of five to receive vaccination, given that the Omicron virus is reported to affect children under five years the most?

**NW3373E**

# REPLY:

No COVID-19 vaccines are currently approved for use in South Africa in children under the age of 12 years.

Trials in young children have been completed for two inactivated vaccines (Sinovac-CoronaVac and BBIBP-CorV), and these products have been approved by Chinese authorities for use in children 3-17 years. However, although these vaccines have received emergency use approval from the World Health Organization (WHO) for adults, they have to date not been approved by WHO for use in children1. Several additional COVID-19 vaccines are undergoing trials in young children (including children as young as 6 months of age). Results from these trials are expected in late 2021 or early in 2022, and it is likely that the manufacturers will then apply for regulatory approval for the vaccines to be administered to children under five years of age. Decisions to vaccinate young children in South Africa will require approval by SAHPRA, and will be guided by recommendations of the Vaccine Ministerial Advisory Committee.

It should be noted that whilst initial COVID cases caused by the Omicron variant included a large proportion of children under five years of age, this pattern has changed with more cases now being seen in older (adult) age groups. The incidence and severity of disease in young children is being carefully monitored in order to understand the impact of the new variant on young children.

Caregivers should protect young children from COVID infection by ensuring that all household members and other close contacts who are eligible to be vaccinated, are fully vaccinated, and that standard COVID prevention practices are followed at all times.

END.

**1** World Health Organization. Interim statement on COVID-19 vaccination for children and adolescents. 24 November 2021