



C20-L20 statement

Translating commitments into action:

supporting the TRIPS waiver is essential to end the COVID-19 pandemic

Despite ambitious language from world leaders on equitable and rapid distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and treatments, there remains a concerning disconnect between words and deeds.

Two decades of empirical evidence have solidly demonstrated that **intellectual property rights (IPRs) in the pharmaceutical sector represent a significant barrier to equitable and sustainable access to lifesaving health products**, due to the impact that such rights determine on the pricing and availability of medicines, vaccines, diagnostics and other medical tools. History risks repeating itself now with COVID-19 biomedical and health tools that the world dramatically needs. Patent ownerships on the vaccines platforms and IP restrictions on the novel technologies such as mRNA vaccines and monoclonal antibodies are already limiting manufacturing and price flexibility, in the face of 93 billions of public investment in R&D during 2020.

Confronted with a global situation of around 110 million confirmed cases and a toll of over 2.4 million deaths, challenged by the emergence of new threatening variants of SARS-CoV-2, the G20 leaders have the moral and political obligation **to take every measure that can put an end to this pandemic**.

As the study commissioned by the International Chamber of Commerce Research Foundation demonstrates, if vaccines nationalism continued to be rampant the global economy could suffer losses of over US\$ 9.2 trillion: this is one additional reason why COVID-19 vaccines must be equitably distributed to all. Without offering safe and healthy working conditions to all workers, particularly those who in these months guaranteed fundamental services to communities paying a high toll to the pandemic, no durable and resilient recovery would take place in all countries of the world.

World's governments are dealing with an unprecedented economic and social crisis and their critical resources should not be now spent on sustaining the cumbersome legal intricacies of intellectual property disputes on COVID-19 technologies with patent holders. **This means that G20 countries need to support the proposal put forward by India and South Africa at the World Trade Organization (WTO)³ to waive intellectual property rights related to COVID-19 goods and facilitate dissemination of existing medical knowledge.** Supporting the TRIPS waiver means translating into actions the announced commitments aimed at making all COVID-19 vaccines and treatments "global public goods".

The IP Waiver proposal, supported by over 100 countries globally, will be further debated and finally voted at the WTO General Council on 1-2 March 2021. **The Civil20 and Labour20 urge the G20 leaders to express a firm position in favor of the waiver**, as requested by over 400 civil society, trade unions, international organizations, science experts around the world, and UN special Rapporteurs. Waiving IP rights will be the most important and effective act to ensure the necessary increase in production and supply of much needed COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics, tests and other medical tools. Sharing existing scientific and technical knowledge will lead to:

- **Accelerating the end of the pandemic:** A TRIPS waiver is critical to maximize the global production capacity, ensure affordable prices and facilitate technology transfer, in order to secure prompt and coordinated global containment of the virus spread. The G20 governments' commitment in this direction will speed up the process and help to respond to the dangerous rise of SARS-CoV-2 variants. We cannot repeat the mistakes of the AIDS crisis, which led to 7.6 million

preventable deaths in Sub-Saharan Africa alone, due to high prices and restrictive IP rules and continues to limit the response to HIV in the countries that need it most.

- **Preparing for future pandemic scenarios and addressing existing epidemics:** The world needs to equip itself with the appropriate norms or policies enabling it to shorten the lifespan of health emergencies and pandemics. Global value chains have proven their vulnerability in providing timely and universal access to individual protection devices, vaccines and treatments and must be reshaped and submitted to the universal right to health. Ensuring access to lifesaving treatments, diagnostics and vaccines is essential to face these scenarios with effectiveness. The TRIPS waiver could set the stage for realistic discussions within the UN, WTO and other fora about the new rules that must be put in place to manage the increasing incidence of viral threats and future pandemic forecasts, as well as address current communicable and non-communicable emergencies.

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