

Vaccine Access & Global Health Working Group Statement

To the 12th World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference
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As the C20 Vaccine Access and Global Health Working Group (VAHWG)¹, we have the overarching goal of the **Right to Health for all** encompassing **people-centred Universal Health Coverage (UHC)**. The health and well-being of people through **rights-based, intergenerationally-inclusive and gender-transformative approaches are essential** for **evidence-based, economically beneficial and sustainable solutions** inclusive of **sexual reproductive health and rights and gender medicine** through mechanisms/processes that are **transparent and accountable** for **equitable health policies and solutions**.

We put **vulnerable groups^{2,3}, marginalised communities⁴ and key populations⁵** at the centre of **global health strategies and responses**, including ensuring the **meaningful and inclusive participation of community-based and -led, and civil society organisations in all levels of political, decision-making, implementation and monitoring processes in achieving UHC for all**.

The C20 VAHWG submits the following points in response to the TRIPS Waiver Proposal that will be discussed during WTO MC-12.

We fully support the joint statement "[Translating commitments into action: Supporting the TRIPS Waiver is essential to end the COVID-19 pandemic](#)" released by the Civil 20 and Labour 20 in 2021.

We note little progress has been made to expedite equitable access globally to COVID-19 tools, despite commitments made in the [Rome Declaration](#) including "*that sustained investments in global health, towards achieving UHC with primary healthcare at its centre, One Health, and preparedness and resilience, are broad social and macro-economic investments in global public goods, and that the cost of inaction is order of magnitude greater*"; "*the urgent need to scale up efforts, including through synergies between the public and private sectors and multilateral efforts, to enhance timely, global and equitable access to safe, effective and affordable COVID-19 tools*"; and the "*importance of working with all relevant public and private partners rapidly to increase the equitable availability of tools and to enhance access to them... Facilitating trade and transparency across the entire value chain; promoting increased efficiency in the use of capacities and global distribution by cooperation and expansion of existing capacities, including by working consistently with the TRIPS agreement and the 2001 Doha Declaration on the TRIPS agreement and Public Health; and Promoting the use of tools such as voluntary licencing agreements of intellectual property, voluntary technology and know-how transfers, and patent pooling on mutually-agreed terms*".

We remain steadfast in our position that Trade Related Aspects on Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) have demonstrated that **Intellectual Property Rights is one of the most significant barriers to equitable and sustainable access to health products - including patents, trade secrets, copyrights, industrial designs, and undisclosed data related to medical technologies, which constitute barriers to the production and supply of COVID-19 tools**. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused more than 5 million deaths worldwide, and not only exacerbated inequalities amongst the most vulnerable and

¹ The C20 VAHWG is one of the thematic working groups of the C20, a formal engagement group of the G20.

² [Vulnerable groups](#) as specified in the 2030 Agenda include children, youth, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV (PLHIV), older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees, internally displaced persons, and migrants.

³ Including peoples impacted by war, conflict, terrorist insurgency, and political unrest.

⁴ This includes communities who are excluded from mainstream social, economic, educational, and/or cultural life.

⁵ [Key populations](#) are defined according to WHO as people who inject drugs, men who have sex with men, transgender people, sex workers and people in prisons and other closed settings.

marginalised, it has also brought to the surface very real inequality in access to vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics in times of emergency. The World Health Organization recommended target to vaccinate 70% of the population in every country by mid-2022 have not been reached. As of May 31, only 58 countries and territories were able to reach that target (not including the United States) and none are from low-income countries. Collectively, only 16.2% of low-income countries' population has received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. With the current global situation, where there is still a very real gap in vaccine access, the G20 must be morally and politically responsible for implementing policies that can stop the pandemic and address inequities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the problems of limited manufacturing capacities in LMICs, but at the same time revealed that innovation, R&D, and manufacturing capacity does exist in diverse regions – including local manufacturers manufacturing their own diagnostic tests without any external technology transfer. For vaccines, there are over 100 pharmaceutical manufacturers across Asia, Africa and Latin America with the existing technical requirements and quality standards to manufacture mRNA vaccines should the technology and knowhow be available.

The TRIPS Waiver is critical to maximise the global production capacity, ensure affordable prices and facilitate technology transfer. It has been 18 months since India and South Africa proposed a waiver on intellectual property that is relevant to COVID-19 tools. This proposal has been supported by most developing countries, civil society organizations, academics, and Nobel Laureates.

The European Union and United States are reaching a compromise at the WTO accepting a waiver that only covers vaccines although the original proposal included not only intellectual property protections on patents, but also therapeutics, copyrights, diagnostics and industrial designs for COVID-19 treatments and tests as well as vaccines. This is unacceptable for LMICs which continue to face an ongoing pandemic that is enlarging the gap of inequalities and barriers among and within countries. The access to the intellectual property needed to manufacture COVID-19 tools is a matter of equality and in fulfilling the fundamental right to health.

The Civil-20 calls on G20 Leaders to support the TRIPS Waiver Proposal and commit to the full text of the TRIPS Waiver Proposal, we stand behind a true waiver that does not introduce new, unnecessary TRIPS+ obligations for members using the text, such as notification requirements and anti-diversion clauses.

Finally, **the TRIPS waiver should not only apply to vaccines, but to all goods and services relevant to pandemic control.** Eligibility criteria that would prevent many countries with significant COVID-19 vaccine production capacity from availing themselves of the waiver, should not be set.

The world and each single country needs to remember the lesson learned from the COVID-19 pandemic: “No country is safe until everybody is safe”

We wish you fruitful deliberations and look forward to the points raised above incorporated in your discussions and working with you closely to leave no one behind.