



Pharmaceutical industry expresses deep disappointment with decision on waiving intellectual property rights adopted at the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference

- IFPMA, the body representing biopharmaceutical companies in Geneva, expresses deep disappointment with the decision taken to adopt a TRIPS waiver, despite intellectual property (IP) not being a barrier to vaccine scale-up and wide acknowledgment of vaccines surplus.
- IP has enabled the rapid research and development of several effective vaccines against COVID-19 and underpinned the more than 380 voluntary partnerships; while trade barriers have severely undermined collective efforts to deliver vaccines to those who need them most.
- Industry warns that such an “empty shell” and fact-free decision can have severe consequences on innovation and global health security.

17 June 2022, Geneva – Today’s decision at the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference (MC12) to endorse a TRIPS waiver for COVID-19 vaccines sends the wrong message to those carrying out research and development and innovating. It incorrectly points to intellectual property (IP) as a barrier to the pandemic response rather than an enabler bringing healthcare solutions, safely and quickly to patients.

IP has supported the fastest development and scale-up of safe and effective vaccines in history, with 13.9 billion COVID-19 vaccines produced to date. The IP framework has provided the basis for more than 380 voluntary partnerships for COVID-19 vaccines to be set up in record time, 88% of which involve technology transfer¹.

Today’s decision sends a dangerous signal not only to the pharmaceutical industry but to all innovative sectors. Dismantling the very framework that has brought solutions to tackle COVID-19 and facilitated the unprecedented number of partnerships, voluntary licensing, and knowledge-sharing taking place during this pandemic can have ripple effects for the future.

Thomas Cueni, IFPMA Director-General, said: “The conversations on an intellectual property waiver have been challenging from the beginning, with disregard to evidence and facts. The decision is a disservice to the scientists that left no stone unturned and undermines manufacturing partnerships on every continent. The single biggest factor affecting vaccine scarcity is not intellectual property, but trade. This has not been fully addressed by the World Trade Organization”.

About IFPMA

IFPMA (<https://www.ifpma.org/>) represents the research-based pharmaceutical companies and associations across the globe. The research-based pharmaceutical industry’s 2 million employees discover, develop, and deliver medicines and vaccines that improve the life of patients worldwide. Based in Geneva, IFPMA has official relations with the United Nations and contributes industry expertise to help the global health community find solutions that improve global health.

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¹ <https://www.ifpma.org/resource-centre/research-based-biopharmaceutical-industry-on-the-trips-waiver-discussions-at-wto-ministerial-conference-mc12>