

Governments Must Break Big Pharma-WTO Stranglehold on Access to Medicine by Taking Immediate Action to Prioritize Human Lives Over Pharmaceutical Monopolies

Wednesday 22 June 2022, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 17 June 2022).

More than two years into a pandemic that has killed 15 million people, World Trade Organization intellectual property barriers shamefully remain a deadly obstruction limiting global access to COVID-19 vaccines, tests & treatments. A few wealthy countries promoting pharmaceutical corporation interests have been able to block the use of the WTO's waiver mechanism to temporarily suspend such barriers despite more than 100 WTO member countries supporting a waiver. The WTO's notoriously exclusionary, oppressive processes have been deployed instead to force through a sham text that will not improve global access to COVID-19 medicines because it not only fails to remove IP obstacles but outrageously adds further constraints to existing WTO flexibilities for medicines production. This outrageous situation underscores that governments must take immediate actions to bypass the WTO's prioritization of pharmaceutical monopolies over human lives.

By acting on behalf of pharmaceutical interests and blocking WTO removal of intellectual property (IP) barriers to global vaccines, tests, and treatment access, the European Union, Switzerland and United Kingdom have betrayed the billions of people worldwide who still need access to lifesaving vaccines, medications, and diagnostics. In failing to deliver on a vaccine waiver for which it announced support and blocking the inclusion of treatments and tests, the United States has also turned its back on a planet desperate for the COVID pandemic to end.

The failure to temporarily waive the WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) as demanded by the vast majority of the world's countries and by public health experts and health workers, generic medicine manufacturers, human rights advocates, faith leaders, labor unions, community groups, scores of Nobel laureates and former heads of state, the World Health Organization Director-General and even the Pope spotlights just how broken and dangerously out-of-touch the WTO remains.

Health needs cannot be subservient to pharmaceutical monopoly's profits. In response to the ongoing failure to adopt a temporary waiver of pharmaceutical IP monopolies on COVID medical countermeasures, civil society organizations around the globe are calling on governments to:

1. Pledge not to use the WTO's and other trade and investment agreements' dispute mechanisms or other means in an attempt to stop or dissuade countries from producing, distributing or using medical technologies or from sharing information on how to do so regardless of WTO and free trade agreement IP rules;

2. Take every step necessary to save lives and end the pandemic, including by fully using the WTO's existing, albeit limited, flexibilities;
3. Circumvent the WTO's pharmaceutical monopoly rules when possible and outright defy those rules when needed.

This united call comes as the WTO concludes its most significant decision-making meeting since the start of the COVID-19 — the 12th WTO ministerial Conference — without agreeing to temporarily remove WTO IP rules that restrict the production and supply of COVID vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics

For roughly 20 months, the obstinance and bullying of a few very economically-powerful WTO member states was allowed to run roughshod over the wishes of more than 100 countries to waive WTO TRIPS obstacles to global access to COVID-19 medical tools. The TRIPS waiver text proposed in October 2020 by South Africa and India enjoyed cosponsorship from 65 WTO member countries, but outrageously negotiations on this text were never allowed. Under the WTO's unacceptable processes, a text written by the WTO Secretariat and supported only by the main waiver-blocker, the European Union, was pushed forward to be railroaded through the Ministerial. History will harshly record the WTO's contribution to COVID vaccine, treatment and test apartheid.

The WTO's threat to global access to medicines did not start with COVID-19. For decades, the WTO has steadfastly refused to put shared global priorities like saving lives and ending pandemics ahead of the narrow profit and power-seeking interest of pharmaceutical monopolies. This was clear at the turn of the century during the peak of the HIV/AIDS crisis, and has only become even more clear with the WTO's unconscionable inaction during the COVID crisis today.

The WTO's draconian IP rules have already contributed to prolonging the current pandemic and, if countries can't get these rules out of the way, they will continue to contribute to massive public health, economic and social damage during future pandemics as well. And pandemics are not the only matters of concern. Billions of people lack access to lifesaving medicines that prevent, treat and cure illnesses because intellectual property regimes distort research priorities, create scarcity by artificially restricting supplies, and allow excessive pricing and inequitable distribution that affects the poor and people living in lower-income countries. Countries that don't accept these rules are subjected to trade threats and repercussions, undermining their own sovereign processes and rules. This cannot continue.

The world must not allow the deadly vaccine apartheid that characterized the first generation of COVID vaccine manufacturing and distribution to be recreated when it comes to COVID diagnostics, treatments and second-generation vaccines. With the WTO process failing to suspend WTO IP rules to prevent this ongoing and disastrous injustice, governments who are also WTO member states must now act in good faith outside of the WTO's strictures.

ActionAid International
African Alliance
ALAMES Internacional
Amnesty International
Asia Pacific Council of AIDS Service Organizations (APCASO)
Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law, and Development
Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW)
Association of Women of Southern Europe (AFEM)
Building and Wood Workers' International, Asia Pacific (BWI AP)
Campaign of Campaigns

Coalition of Agriculture Workers International (CAWI)
Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO)
DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era) =
Doctors for Global Health
FEMNET- African Women's Development & Communication Network
Focus on the Global South
Free the Vaccine for COVID-19
Friends of the Earth International
Frontline AIDS
Gender and Trade Network
Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP)
Greenpeace
Health Action International (HAI)
Internacional de los Servicios Públicos, Sub-region Andina (ISP Andina)
International Trade Union Confederation
International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific
International-Lawyers.org
Médecins du Monde International Network
Oxfam
Partners In Health
People's Health Movement (PHM)
People's Health Movement (PHM) Europe
Peoples Vaccine Alliance
People's Vaccine Alliance - Asia
Progressive Doctors
Project Organising Development Education and Research (PODER)
Public Services International (PSI)
Public Services International, Southeast Asia (PSI SEA)
Regions Refocus
Sexual Rights Initiative
Social Watch
Society for International Development (SID)
South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE)
South Feminist Futures
SumOfUs
Transnational Institute
UNI Global Union
Universities Allied for Essential Medicines - UAEM
Vaccine Advocacy Resource Group
Vacunas para la gente (PVA-LAC)
World Federation of Public Health Associations

Asociación Sindical de Profesionales de la Salud de la Provincia de BuenosAires / CICOP - Argentina
Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS) - Argentina
CTM (Confederación de trabajadores municipales de la República Argentina) - Argentina
Federación Argentina de Medicina General - Argentina
Fesprosa - Argentina
Fundación Grupo Efecto Positivo - Argentina
Fundacion para Estudio e Investigacion de la Mujer - Argentina
iIGG / UBA - Argentina
Instituto del Mundo del Trabajo - Argentina

Investigadora asociada al GT Salud Internacional CLACSO - Argentina
Movimiento Nacional de salud LAICRIMPO - Argentina
Movimiento por la Salud de los Pueblos - Argentina
People's Health Movement (PHM) Andean Region - Argentina
Sociology of Health Dept. - University of Buenos Aires - Argentina
Union de Tabajadores de la Salud - Argentina
ActionAid Australia - Australia
Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network - Australia
Australian Nursing Federation (SA Branch) - Australia
NSW Nurses and Midwives Association - Australia
Public Health Association of Australia - Australia
Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania - Australia
Bangladesh Women Welfare Workers Union - Bangladesh
Naripokkho - Bangladesh
NRDS, Bangladesh - Bangladesh
UBINIG (Policy Research for Development Alternative) - Bangladesh
Alliance nationale des Mutualités chrétiennes / National Alliance of Christian Mutual Health Funds - Belgium
CETRI - Centre tricontinental - Belgium
Viva Salud - Belgium
Asociación Latinoamericana de Medicina Social ALAMES - Bolivia
Bolivian Committee for Consumer's Rights Protection CODECO - PHM Bolivia - Bolivia
Movimiento de la Salud de los Pueblos - Bolivia
Movimiento de Salud Popular y Agroecología de Bolivia - Bolivia
AGANIM-RJ - Associação de Amigos e Gays de Nova Iguaçu, Mesquita e Rio de Janeiro - Brasil
ANAIDS - Articulação Nacional de Luta contra a Aids - Brasil
Associação Brasileira Interdisciplinar de AIDS - Brasil
Centro Brasileiro de Estudos de Saúde (Cebes) - Brasil
EQUIT Institute: Gender, Economy and Global Citizenship - Brasil
Federação Nacional dos Farmacêuticos - Brasil
FETAMCE - Brasil
Fórum Maranhense Das Respostas Comunitárias De Luta Contra As Is / AIDS E Hepatites Virais - Brasil
Giv - (grupo de incentivo à vida) - Brasil
Grupo de Apoio A Prevenção da AIDS do Rio Grande do Sul - GAPARS - Brasil
Grupo de Resistência Asa Branca- GRAB - Brasil
Grupo de Trabajo sobre Propriedad Intelectual de la Rd Brasileira por la Integracion de los Pueblos
GTPI/REBRIP - Brasil
Rede de Pesquisa em APS - Brasil
Sindicato dos Enfermeiros do Estado de São Paulo - Brasil
Sindsep (Sindicato dos Servidores Municipais de São Paulo) - Brasil
SINDSMCRATO- sindicato de servidores Municipais de Crato/CE - Brasil
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives - Canada
Canadian Fair Trade Network (CFTN) - Canada
Canadian Health Coalition -Canada
Canadian Union of Public Employees / Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique - Canada
Common Frontiers - Canada
Council of Canadians - Le Conseil des Canadiens - Canada
Trade Justice Network - Canada
Agrupación de Mujeres Democráticas - Chile
Asociación de Fiscalizadores de Impuestos Internos de Chile - Chile

Asociación Latinoamericana de Medicina Social ALAMES - Chile
Confederación Fenpruss - Chile
CONFUSAM Confederación Nacional de Salud Municipal - Chile
ECOSS de Barrio - Chile
Federación de Asociaciones de Salud Pública - Chile
ADEA - Colombia
Asociación Latinoamericana de Medicina Social ALAMES - Colombia
Asociación Nacional de Enfermeras de Colombia - Colombia
Centro de apoyo para Discapacidad CAD - Colombia
Centro de Pensamiento Medicamentos, Información y Poder - Colombia
Colombian Association of Public Health (Asociación Colombiana de Salud Pública - ACSP) - Colombia
Congreso de los pueblos - Colombia
Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, Colombia (CLACSO) - Colombia
Escuela Ciudadana - Colombia
Facultad Nacional de Salud Pública de la Universidad de Antioquia - Colombia
Federación Médica Colombiana - Colombia
Fruit aces sas - Colombia
Fundación IFARMA - Colombia
Fundación Tradición Oral - Colombia
GHP Corp - Colombia
Grupo de Investigación PLEBIO, at (UNAL-Universidad Nacional de Colombia) - Colombia
Huellas De Arte Mujeres Viviendo Con VIH SIDA - Colombia
Organización Colegial de Enfermería - Colombia
Red de Universidades y Organizaciones Sociales en Salud para la Paz - Colombia
Secretaría de Salud Popayán - Colombia
Sinedian - Colombia
Sunet - Bucaramanga - Colombia
Universidad Nacional de Colombia - Alames - MSP - Colombia
Universidades Aliadas por el Acceso a Medicamentos Esenciales, Capítulo- Colombia
Seccional ANEP Municipalidad de Goicoechea - Costa Rica
Sindicato del Ministerio de Hacienda - Costa Rica
Sociedad Cubana de Salud Pública (SOCUSAP) - Cuba
Colegio Médico Provincial del Guayas - Ecuador
Confederación Nacional de Servidores Públicos del Ecuador - Ecuador
Federación Nacional Única de Afiliados al Seguro Social Campesino FEUNAS - Ecuador
Frente de Defensa del Río Piatúa - Santa Clara/Puyo/Ecuador - Ecuador
Frente Nacional por la Salud de los Pueblos del Ecuador - Ecuador
Fundacion Desafio - Ecuador
Mujeres por el Cambio - Ecuador
Sociedad Ecuatoriana de Salud Pública - Ecuador
AGEPYM (Asociación General de Empleados Públicos y Municipales) - El Salvador
Asociación Latinoamericana de Medicina Social ALAMES - El Salvador - El Salvador
Federación Mundial de Asociaciones de Salud Pública - -El Salvador
Sindicato de Trabajadores del Instituto Salvadoreño del Seguro Social (STISSS) - El Salvador
AbibiNsroma Foundation - Ghana
Edikanman foundation.org - Ghana
Health Services Workers' Union of TUC, Ghana - Ghana
Fetransgua - Guatemala
Red de acceso a medicamentos - Guatemala
Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala (STUSC) - Guatemala

Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores del Organismo Legislativo (STOL) - Guatemala
AHTELAB-C/FUTSH - Honduras
Asociación nacional de anedtesistas de Honduras - Honduras
FUTSH - Honduras
SIESPEH - Honduras
Sindicato de Trajabadores de la Municipalidad Sampedrana - Honduras
SITRAMEDHYS - Honduras
All India Drug Action Network - India
All India People's Science Network (AIPSN) - India
All India Union of Forest Working People AIUFWP - India
DEEPS - India
Delhi Science Forum - India
Initiative for Health And Equity in Society - India
Innovative Alliance for Public Health - India
IT for Change - India
Jan Swasthya Abhiyan - India
Karnataka Janaarogya chaluvali - India
Nagpur Municipal Corporation Employees Union - India
Penn Thozhilalargal Sangam - India
Sama Resource Group for Women and Health - India
Sisterhood Network (SN) - India
Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union (TGPWU) - India
FSBPI - Indonesia
FSP FARKES/R - Indonesia
Indonesia AIDS Coalition - Indonesia
Indonesia for Global Justice (IGJ) - Indonesia
PROGRESS Kalimantan - Indonesia
Access to Medicines Ireland - Ireland
Doctors for Vaccine Equity - Ireland
The Association of Leaders of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland - Ireland
Associazione l'Arte di Crescere - Italy
Fairwatch - Italy
Gruppo Allattando a Faenza GAAF - Italy
IBFAN Italy - Italy
Italia che resiste - Italy
Medicina Democratica - Italy
No Profit on Pandemic Campaign - Italy
NoGrazie - Italy
Policies for Equitable Access to Health (PEAH) - Italy
Independent trade union for the workers in northern municipalities / Jordan -Jordan
Feminist League - Kazakhstan
Kamukunji Paralegal Trust (KAPLET) - Kenya
Kenya Electrical Trades & Allied Workers Union - KETAWU - Kenya
Union of Kenya Civil Servants - Kenya
OSSEDI Malawi - Malawi
Consumers' Association of Penang - Malaysia
Sahabat Alam Malaysia (Friends of the Earth) - Malaysia
Asociación Latinoamericana de Medicina Social ALAMES - México
EAPSEC A.C. - Chiapas - Mexico
Federación Nacional FESTEM. México - Mexico
Fes Zaragoza, UNAM - Mexico

Medical Impact - Mexico
Red de Investigadores sobre Factores Psicosociales en el Trabajo - Mexico
Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México - Mexico
Sindicato Unico de Trabajadores al Servicio del Estado Municipios e instituciones dewcentralizadas de carácter estatal de Nayarit - Mexico
Sindicato Único de Trabajadores del Poder Judicial de Yucatán - Mexico
STUNAM - Mexico
Humanitarian Accountability Monitoring Initiative (HAMI) - Nepal
Its Our Future - New Zealand
Contribution à l'éducation de base - Niger
Centre for Family Health Initiative (CFHI) - Nigeria
National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives - Nigeria
Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women - North Macedonia
All Pakistan Labour Federation - Pakistan
Crofter Foundation - Pakistan
Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum - Pakistan
Roots for Equity - Pakistan
Asociación Latinoamericana de Medicina Social ALAMES - Paraguay - Paraguay
Central San Lorenzo - Paraguay
Federacio de Sindicatos de Funcionarios de Universidades Nacionales - FESIFUNA - Paraguay
SITRANDE - Paraguay
FENTAT-SUNAT - Peru
Foro Salud - Peru
Red Peruana por una Globalización con Equidad (RedGE) - Peru
Alliance of Filipino Workers - Philippines
Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa (SENTRO) - Philippines
Unified Filipino Service Workers (UFSW) - Philippines
Women Studies and Resource Center - Philippines
Sindicato de Trabajadores de Enfermería - República Dominicana
Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación Dominicana - República Dominicana
Tumukunde Initiative - Rwanda
Syndicat des personnels civils des armées et services de sécurité - Sénégal
Electricity Employees' Union - Sierra Leone
Health Justice Initiative (HJI) - South Africa
Masimanyane Women's Rights International - South Africa
Rural Health Advocacy Project - South Africa
SEATINI - South Africa (Southern And East African Trade Institute) - South Africa
SECTION27 - South Africa
Trade Collective Feminist Think Tank - South Africa
Associations of Physicians for Humanism (APH) - South Korea
Korean Pharmacists for Democratic Society (KPDS) - South Korea
Medecins du Monde International Network - Spain
Salud por Derecho - Spain
We Women Lanka - Srilanka
Association for Proper Internet Governance - Switzerland
Centre Europe - Tiers monde (CETIM) - Switzerland
Public Eye - Switzerland
AIDS Access Foundation - Thailand
Climate Watch Thailand - Thailand
FTA Watch - Thailand
Coalition for Health Promotion and Social Development (HEPS Uganda) - Uganda

National Union of Educational Institutions - Uganda
Uganda public employees union - Uganda
Réseau québécois pour une mondialisation inclusive (RQMI) - Quebec
Black Activists Rising Against Cuts BARAC UK - UK
Global Justice Now - UK
Just Treatment - UK
American Friends Service Committee - United States
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) - United States
Body Politic - United States
California Trade Justice Coalition - United States
Campaign for America's Future - United States
Citizens Trade Campaign - United States
Coalition of Labor Union Women, AFL-CIO - United States
Fair World Project - United States
Hawaii Institute For Human Rights - United States
Health Advocacy International - United States
Health Care for All Oregon - Action - United States
Health GAP (Global Access Project) - United States
Initiative for Medicines Access & Knowledge (I-MAK) - United States
Justice is Global - United States
Latin America Working Group (LAWG) - United States
Malu Arts Projects Inc - United States
Metro New York Health Care for All - United States
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice - United States
New York Trade Justice Coalition - United States
Other98 - United States
Physicians for a National Health Program - United States
Portland Jobs with Justice - United States
Public Citizen - United States
R2H Action [Right to Health] - United States
Rethink Trade - United States
Trade Justice Education Fund - United States
Treatment Action Group - United States
United States Catholic Mission Association - United States
Washington Fair Trade Coalition - United States
Word Play Therapy, LLC - United States
Fedesimhidroven - Venezuela
SunepSas - Venezuela
Civil Society SDGs Campaign GCAP Zambia - Zambia

P.S.

• Jun 17, 2022:

<https://focusweb.org/governments-must-break-big-pharma-wto-stranglehold-on-access-to-medicine-by-taking-immediate-action-to-prioritize-human-lives-over-pharmaceutical-monopolies/>