

June 4, 2021

Prime Minister SUGA Yoshihide
Foreign Minister MOTEGI Toshimitsu
Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry KAJIYAMA Hiroshi
Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare, TAMURA Norihisa

Request to the Government of Japan: Support the waiver of intellectual property rights on COVID-19

Equal Health and Medical Access on COVID-19 for All!"

Japan Network

It has been more than a year since the WHO declaration of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Many efforts have been made, such as the development of vaccines and advances in diagnosis and treatment, and in some countries, the infection is being controlled. On the other hand, COVID-19 continues to gain momentum on a global scale, with more than 400,000 new infections recorded per day in India due to the emergence of highly infectious mutants. As the saying goes, "No one is safe, until everyone is safe," it is essential to control the infection worldwide and prevent the growth and spread of highly infectious and virulent mutant strains. To achieve this, it is crucial to deliver necessary tools of prevention, diagnosis, and treatment, including vaccines, to the world in a prompt and equitable manner, and to build a resilient society that can cope with COVID-19 and other emerging pandemics, including by strengthening health systems and preventing non-communicable diseases.

It has been more than half a year since the Republic of South Africa and India submitted a proposal to the World Trade Organization (WTO) on 2nd October last year to exempt some of the intellectual property rights related to COVID-19. By now, the number of co-sponsors of the proposal has increased to 62 countries, and more than half of the member countries support the proposal. Many civil society organizations working in the field of health care in developing and emerging countries are also in favor of this proposal. The government of the United States of America, which had previously opposed the proposal, supported it on May 5 and expressed its strong desire to proceed with text-based negotiations. As a result, the European Union and other countries, which had maintained their opposition to the proposal, are beginning to reconsider their stance.

We, the " Equal Health and Medical Access on COVID-19 for All!" Japan Network (hereinafter referred to as the "Japan Network") hereby requests the Japanese government to agree to the "waiver of some intellectual property rights related to COVID-19" proposed by South Africa and other co-proposing countries at the WTO, and to actively participate in the future negotiations. The reasons are as follows:

1.Existing measures have reached their limits due to the worsening COVID-19 crisis

The goal of the proposal is to end COVID-19 globally at the earliest time by increasing the production of vaccines and new products related to COVID-19 to meet the global public health needs related to COVID-19. To this end, it proposes to waive intellectual property rights related to COVID-19 prevention, diagnosis, and treatment technologies, including vaccines, and promote technology sharing and cooperation so that more partners, including developed and developing countries, can accelerate the production and supply of goods necessary for COVID-19 prevention, diagnosis, and treatment on an equal basis.

The biggest problem is that global COVID-19 control measures under intellectual property rights, which have been greatly strengthened and globalized since the 1990s, are facing limitations and are not able to respond to the worsening COVID-19 crisis caused by the emergence of mutant strains.

We commend the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT Accelerator) and its vaccine partnership, COVAX, for the swift move toward its establishment and its achievement in the midst of this unprecedented crisis. We also commend the Japanese government for its active support to COVAX and other key ACT Accelerator organizations, and for holding the COVAX Vaccine Summit jointly with the GAVI Alliance on June 2.

However, according to COVAX's "Global Supply Forecast" (April 7, 2021), only 26% of the population of the target countries will be supplied with vaccines by the end of 2021. In addition, the variety of vaccines COVAX can supply is limited; actually a significant portion of its supply relies on AstraZeneca's vaccine (Covishield), which is produced under license by the Serum Institute of India. The country, which has been hit by the extreme spread of mutated strains of the virus since March has now suspended vaccine exports, and COVAX's supply of vaccines to the world is facing a major crisis.

2. Overcome the COVID-19 Crisis through the Temporary and Partial Waiver of Intellectual Property Rights

In light of this situation, it is imperative that, until COVID-19 is brought under control, the shackles of intellectual property rights be lifted and technology sharing and cooperation be accelerated to diversify the types and supply of vaccines. Without this, COVAX will not be able to continue to supply vaccines in a sustainable manner. To overcome global COVID-19 crisis, it is also critical to go beyond the limit of procurement from COVAX and ensure a rapid and equitable supply of vaccines on a global scale. Furthermore, it is crucial to promote the production of various supplies necessary for the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of COVID-19, including oxygen, which has become a huge challenge in India, and therapeutic agents for which much knowledge has been obtained through accumulated clinical experience. The temporary and partial waiver of the intellectual property rights related to the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of COVID-19, as well as the vaccine, is a starting point for meeting the global public health needs to overcome the pandemic. Actually, the GAVI Vaccine Alliance, which is responsible for vaccine supply within COVAX, has issued a statement welcoming the US decision to support IP Waiver¹.

Until everyone is safe, no one is safe. With these words in mind, we hereby urge the Japanese government to support the "waiver of partial intellectual property rights related to COVID-19" proposed by the Republic of South Africa and other co-proposing countries at the WTO, and to actively participate in the coming negotiations.

“Equal Health and Medical Access on COVID-19 for All!” Japan Network

Called by: (signees)

Pacific Asia Resource Center (PARC)

Asian Health Institute (AHI)

Africa Japan Forum (AJF)

Doctors without Borders Japan

Services for the Health in Asian/African Regions (SHARE)

People's Health Movement Japan Circle

Japan Overseas Christian Medical Cooperation Service (JOCS)

“Equal Health and Medical Access on COVID-19 for All! Japan Network” is a Japanese civil society network established last November to advocate for global equitable access to prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care of COVID-19.

Contact: Secretariat, Africa Japan Forum (AJF)

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¹ [UPDATE 1-GAVI welcomes Biden move on vaccines, urges U.S. manufacturers to transfer know-how](#) (Reuters, 6th May 2021)

The Names of the Organizations that Signed on the Statement (June 4, 2021)

1. Japanese Organizations (33 organizations)

Asia Arsenic Network
Asia-Japan Women's Resource Center
ayus: Network of Buddhists Volunteers on International Cooperation
Bridges in Public Health
Campaign for the Children of Palestine Japan
Christian Network for Peace -sticking to the Peace Constitution
Civic Institute for Civil Society
DOSANKO Community Health International
Fair Link LLC
Hokkaido NGO nettowaku kyougikai
Human Rights Watch
International Women's Year Liaison Group
Itabashi Peace Museum Campaign
Japan Civil Society Network on SDGs
Japan International Volunteer Center
Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation (JANIC)
Japan-Nepal Female Education Association
MIE NPO Network Center
Nagoya NGO Center
Nagoya Young Women's Christian Association
National Women's Committee of the UN NGOs
Nationwide Network of Education Field Promoting Gender Equality
Okayama Communication Network of the World Conference on Women
Porepore SAKURA
Sasashima Support Center
SDGs network yamanashi
Space Allies
Together with Africa and Asia Association
TOKAI Civil Society Network
Wind of Citizens toward Uniting for Peace
Yokohama NGO Network
Zenkoku Tomo-no-Kai

2. Foreign Organizations (115 Organizations)

Global	Global	Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP)
	Global	FRONTLINE AIDS
	Global	Health GAP (Global Access Project)
	Global	Independent freelancer individual named Hitesh BHATT-india
	Global	Dalit NGO Federation Nepal/Asia Dalit Rights Forum
Regional	Francophone Africa	Yolse, Santé Publique et Innovation
	Asia	Asia Catalyst
	Asia	Fight Inequality Alliance, Asia
	Asia/Pacific	APCASO
	Asia/Pacific	Global Fund Advocates Network Asia-Pacific
	Asia/Pacific	Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV (APN+)
	South Asia	South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE)
	South Asia	South Asia Tax and Fiscal Justice Alliance (SATAFJA)
	South East Asia/Pacific	Health Action Inter3 National Asia Pacific (HAIAP)
	South East Asia/Pacific	People's Health Movement (PHM) South East Asia & Pacific (SEAP)
National	Afghanistan	Afghan NGOs Coordination Bureau (ANCB)
		Your Voice Organization
	Bangladesh	Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio & Communication
		Unnayan Sangha (US)
		Unnayan Shahojogy Team (UST)
		VOICE
		Voluntary Association for Rural Development (VARD)
	Bhutan	Lhak-Sam (Bhutan Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS: BNP+)
	Brazil	Foesp
		Forum Maranhense das Respostas Comunitarias de Luta contra as ist AIDS e Hepatites Virais
		Associação Brasileira Interdisciplinar de AIDS (ABIA)
		Giv (group for Life incentive)
		Grupo de Trabalho Sobre Propriedade Intelectual GTPI
	Cambodia	Kampong Cham 2 Regional Training Center for health
		Khmer HIV/AIDS NGO Alliance (KHANA)
		Live & Learn Cambodia
		Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia (RHAC)
		Women Development Association (WDA)
	Equador	PHM / MSP-Latin America, Andean Subregion Coordination
	Ghana	AbibiNsroma Foundation
	India	<i>3 National Confederation of Dalit & Adivasi Organisations (NACDAOR)</i>
		<i>Arunachal Health Organization</i>
		<i>Centre for Community Development</i>
		<i>Ekam Foundation</i>
		<i>GCAP</i>
		<i>India STEM Foundation</i>
		<i>Inter3 National Solidarity of Academic Freedom in India (Insaf)</i>
		<i>ITIHAS</i>
		<i>Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishath</i>
		<i>Leadership of Environment and Development India (LEAD)</i>
		<i>Leho-Ladakh Environment and Health Organization</i>
		<i>NCPI+ 3 National Coalition of People Living with HIV in India</i>

National		Participatory Action for Sustainable Development Organization
		Rural development council
		Surujmukhi Society for Health Peace and Development
		Tamil Nadu Tribal Development Society
		Women in Development Trust
	Indonesia	DIAKONIA DEPARTEMEN HKBP
		Indonesia AIDS Coalition
		Indonesia Planned Parenthood Association
		KRuHA - people's coalition for the right to water
		Law Firm Siswopranoto, S.H., M.H. and Partner
		Spiritia Foundation
		The Positive Indonesia Network
	Malaysia	Positive Malaysian Treatment Access & Advocacy Group (MTAAG+)
		PT Foundation
	Mauritius and Indian Islands	Halley Movement Coalition
	Mongolia	Centre for Human Rights and Development (CHRD), Mongolia
		Youth for Health Center NGO
	Myanmar	Alliance Myanmar (MAHAMATE Health Care Organization)
	Nepal	3 National Campaign for Sustainable Development Nepal
		Finn Church Aid
		HAMI Nepal Youth Foundation
		Janahit Gramin Sewa Samittee (JGSS)
		Japan Study Center, Nepal
		Nature and Bio-diversity Conservation Research Center
		NGO Federation of Nepal
		NLR Nepal
		People's Health Movement Nepal
		Sindhuli Integrated Development Service (SIDS Nepal), Sindhuli Nepal
		Trisuli Plus Community Action Group
		Vijaya Development Resource Center
	Pakistan	Active Help organization
		AIDS Awareness Society (AAS), Pakistan
		Crofter Foundation
		Development Strategies Associates
		LIFE (Local Initiative for Empowerment) Alliance, Pakistan
		Pakistan Development Alliance
		Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum
		Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum
		RASTI (Research, Advocacy & Social Training Institute)
		Saibaan Development Organization
	Papua New Guinea	KP Advocacy Consortium Papua New Guinea
The Philippines	3 National Acupuncture Detoxification Association (NADA) Philippines Inc.	
	Action for Health Initiatives, Inc. (ACHIEVE)	
	IDUCARE	
	Institute of Primary Health Care-Davao Medical School Foundation, Inc.	
	Peace and Sustainable Development Movers, Inc.	
	Samahang Operasyong Sagip	

National		Tambayan Center for Children's Rights, Incorporated
	Republic of Korea	People's Health Movement (PHM) Korea
	Singapore	ONE (SINGAPORE)
	South Africa	Health and Justice Initiative (HJI)
	Sri Lanka	National Fisheries Solidarity Movement
		National Transgender Network Sri Lanka
		Berendina Development Services
		CARE Consortium Sri Lanka
		Caritas Ratnapura Sethmini
		Diversity and Solidarity Trust Sri Lanka
		Human Development Organization
		SERVE
		Small Fishers federation of Sri Lanka (Sudeesa)
		Young Out Here Sri Lanka
	Thailand	Institute of HIV Research and Innovation
		Stopdrink Network
	United Kingdom	Oxfam Inter3 National
		STOPAIDS
		Health Poverty Action
	United States	Justice is Global
Viet Nam	Center for Supporting Community Development Intiatives	