



October 30, 2020

Minister Mary Ng,  
Minister Navdeep Bains,  
Cc Minister Karina Gould

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**SUBJECT:** Will Canada support South Africa-India TRIPS Waiver proposal at the World Trade Organization?

Dear Minister Ng and Minister Bains,

Eight months into a pandemic that has affected everyone's life everywhere, we are nearing 50 million confirmed cases globally with over one million deaths. The pandemic has had far-reaching consequences beyond the spread of the disease and nowhere has the impact been more severe than in the developing countries.

The Grandmothers Advocacy Network (GRAN) recently became a signatory to a [letter](#) signed by 408 Civil Society Organizations around the world asking the World Trade Organization (WTO) to support India and South Africa's proposal for a waiver from certain provisions of the TRIPS (Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights) Agreement to ensure that testing, treatments, vaccines and other health technologies are accessible to all.

The TRIPS waiver proposal was discussed at the WTO on October 15 and 16 and the decision was deferred. The proposal must now be decided by the WTO TRIPS Council before 31 December 2020.

The waiver does not imply any change to the substantive treaty obligations. The COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP) launched by WHO has been rejected by the pharmaceutical industry which continues to sign secretive and restrictive licensing agreements.

The proposal by India and South Africa could be a game changer in the COVID-19 response and here is why all governments should support it. According to Doctors Without Borders (MSF), the proposal:

- "...includes everyone"- it suggests that the waiver on IP stands until most of the world has reached immunity, it includes everyone, developing and developed countries;

- “...goes way beyond patents and drugs and includes equipment like masks, ventilator valves, crucial components of testing kits and other vital equipment that we’ve seen huge shortages of during peaks of the pandemic”;
- “...will speed up the COVID response”, by removing current IP barriers that limit who can manufacture the lifesaving medical tools and where they can be sold;
- “...will allow more affordable versions of COVID-19 technologies to come to the market sooner.”

With more than a million lives lost to the virus, governments need to work together to ensure global access to COVID-19 medical technologies as soon as possible. Will Canada support the South Africa - India TRIPS Waiver proposal at the World Trade Organization?

The pandemic isn’t over until it’s over for everyone.

Thank you for your review of this urgent matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Janet Siddal and Pat Dolan  
Co-Chairs, GRAN

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