



## **Fix the Patent Laws Coalition supports South Africa and India's proposal to facilitate access to COVID-19 vaccines**

*Johannesburg* - The Fix the Patent Laws Coalition (FTPL), a group of over 40 organisations working to reform South Africa's patent laws, welcomes the progressive proposal by South Africa and India for a waiver of all intellectual property in respect of COVID-19 related diagnostics, therapeutics and vaccines. We have seen how a lack of access to COVID-19 medical tools threatens countries' ability to respond to the virus, especially developing countries. We believe that this proposal will promote and expedite equitable access to all health technologies in all countries.

We call on all countries to support the proposal to the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Council for a temporary waiver of all patents on products needed to test, treat or vaccinate against COVID-19, and to act with urgency. COVID-19 is a global health crisis, and one that affects working class and poor people disproportionately. The world needs bold steps such as this that prioritise the needs of vulnerable populations above profits and above nationalism.

"While the waiver will not by itself lead to access to COVID-19 health technologies, it is an important step towards equitable access," says Executive Director at SECTION27 and FTPL member Umunyana Rugege. "In South Africa, we would like to see the draft amendments to the Patents Act published without delay to ensure that the legal environment is readied for the introduction of a range of diagnostics, medicines and vaccines."

The FTPL coalition has called on the South African government to take the following steps to help fight COVID-19:

1. Put a temporary moratorium on granting patents on COVID-19 related products as they are proven effective.
2. Automatic compulsory licensing of COVID-19 related health products with existing or pending patents.
3. Fix the Patent Laws urgently to ensure use of all legal flexibilities to improve access to health products.

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Website: [www.fixthepatentlaws.org](http://www.fixthepatentlaws.org)

Twitter: [@FixPatentLaw](https://twitter.com/FixPatentLaw)

Fix the Patent Laws is a joint coalition of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), Doctors Without Borders (MSF), SECTION27, Cape Mental Health (CMH), Diabetes SA, Epilepsy SA, Health GAP, Marie Stopes South Africa, the Stop Stock Outs Project (SSP), the Schizophrenia and Bipolar Disorders Alliance (SABDA), the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), the South African Federation of Mental Health (SAFMH), the South African Non-Communicable Diseases Alliance (SANCD Alliance) and the Cancer Alliance including Advocates for Breast Cancer; amaBele Project Flamingo, Ari's Cancer Foundation, Breast Course 4 Nurses (BCN), Breast Health Foundation (BHF), Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSAs), Cancer Heroes, CanSir, CanSurvive Cancer Support (CanSurvive), Care for Cancer Foundation, Childhood Cancer Foundation of South Africa (CHOC), Gladiators of Hope, Hospice Palliative Care Association (HPCA), Lymphoedema Association of South Africa (LAOSA), Look Good Feel Better (LGFB), Love Your Nuts (LYN), Men's Foundation, National Council Against Smoking, National Oncology Nursing Society of SA (NONSA), Pancreatic Cancer Network of SA (PanCaN), People Living With Cancer (PLWC), the Pink Parasol Project, Pink Trees for Pauline (Pink Trees), Pocket Cancer Support, Rainbows and Smiles, Reach for Recovery (R4R), South African Oncology Social Workers' Forum (SAOSWF), The Sunflower Fund (TSF), VREDE Foundation for Young People with Cancer (Vrede Foundation) and Wings of Hope (WoH).

The South African government has shown exemplary leadership on the world stage to ensure that developing and middle-income countries are not left behind while wealthy nations secure deals with pharmaceutical companies, and that monopolies do not stand in the way of widespread African access to COVID-19 vaccines. This is an important opportunity for countries to stand in solidarity and support the call that would ensure all countries stand to benefit from efforts to fight the pandemic.

South Africa's leadership of the African Union and initiatives like the COVAX facility, and the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator have put solidarity before nationalism, and FTPL is fully behind our government in its quest to protect public health and ensure equitable access to medical products.

FTPL has joined a global community of civil society organisations calling for the urgent adoption of the Waiver. You can read the letter from civil society [here](#).

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**About Fix The Patent Laws Coalition:**

*The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), SECTION27, and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) launched the Fix the Patent Laws campaign in November 2011 (on the 10-year anniversary of the Doha Declaration). Since then, the campaign has grown to include 40 organisations representing a range of disease areas including HIV, TB, cancer, sexual health, non-communicable diseases and mental health.*