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HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP
Secretary of State
Department for International Trade
3 Whitehall Place
London, SW1A 2HN

28 November 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

As a group of 92 cross-party parliamentarians, we write to you today to express our deep concern for the continued inequality in global access to COVID-19 vaccines, tests and treatments and to ask you to support the proposal at the World Trade Organisation to temporarily suspend intellectual property barriers on all COVID-19 technologies.

We have much to be proud of as a country in how we have navigated through this global pandemic. We have seen communities come together, our NHS work harder than ever, and helped create new and innovative technologies to test, prevent, and treat a novel virus. However, as we proudly continue to roll out COVID-19 vaccines and boosters and our economy continues to open, millions around the world still remain without access to life-saving vaccines, treatments and other medical tools. To date, [just 5.5% of people](#) across low-income countries have received their first dose, yet in contrast, [over 68%](#) of the UK's population are double vaccinated, and [almost 24%](#) have received a booster dose. This stark inequity is similar for tests, where [in the UK there are over 4,500 tests per 1000 people compared to just 29 per 1000 in Mozambique](#).

Despite commitments from wealthy nations to donate vaccines, as of October 2021, [less than 15% of the 1.8 billion doses promised have been delivered](#). The UK itself has delivered [less than 10% of the 100 million doses](#) it has promised to lower-income nations. COVAX has unfortunately not lived up to its promises as richer nations have hoarded global supplies and pharmaceutical companies have continued to sell their doses to the highest bidder, leaving COVAX almost entirely dependent on the charity of high-income countries.

Whilst donations of vaccines are welcome, it is clear that we cannot rely on them alone to vaccinate the world. The UK must now do more to increase the supply of all COVID-19 health tools and support low and middle-income nations, who are on the frontlines on the current inequity, to manufacture vaccines, tests and treatments locally. A clear way to increase supply is through the temporary waiver of Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS) for COVID-19 technologies, and for the 'tacit' manufacturing know-how for vaccines and other

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technologies to be shared via the World Health Organisation's Covid Technology Access Pool (C-TAP).

A TRIPS waiver would increase and diversify global production of COVID-19 health technologies. Currently, pharmaceutical monopolies are controlling the supply of these medical tools, limiting availability and driving up prices. Temporarily lifting intellectual property barriers, including patents and trade secrets, would mean that producers in countries where there is existing production capacity could manufacture vaccines, treatments and tests for roll-out in low- and middle-income countries at affordable prices. A year has passed since the temporary TRIPS waiver proposal was tabled at the World Trade Organisation (WTO), led by India and South Africa, and supported by [over 100 other nations](#), including the USA, Australia and New Zealand. The proposal also has support from over 100 international IP academics, UN experts, human rights lawyers, global civil society organisations, and Pope Francis, amongst many others. The UK remains one of a few nations that continues to actively oppose it.

The upcoming WTO Ministerial meeting, the MC12, on November 30th is a critical moment to make progress towards a decision on the waiver. This is a key early opportunity in your role as International Trade Secretary to show Global Britain in action, and stand shoulder to shoulder with the many countries who are asking our Government to allow them the same level of access to pandemic tools that we here in the UK have been fortunate enough to enjoy. As the Prime Minister has rightly said, the UK must do its bit to make sure that everybody, in every country, gets the vaccines that they need so that the whole world can come through this pandemic together. This call for global solidarity must be backed by concrete action if the UK is to uphold its reputation as a force for good in the world.

The impact of these decisions will have an effect on people in the UK. SAGE experts have said that if COVID-19 is allowed to continue to run rampant across the world, new mutations of the virus will continue to flourish and could render our existing vaccination efforts obsolete, risking further lives and our economic recovery. The Economist Intelligence Unit has estimated that delayed global vaccination [will cost the global economy \\$2.3 trillion](#) in 2022-25.

We urge you to use this moment to show UK leadership and support the proposal at the WTO for a temporary suspension of the TRIPS agreement, as outlined above, and refrain from blocking this proposal at the WTO MC12 meeting in November. Without progress at this meeting, thousands more people will be deprived of access to life saving vaccines and health technologies, risking lives and wreaking havoc on local economies for years to come.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Dan Poulter MP

Rt Hon Diane Abbott MP
Debbie Abrahams MP
Lord Alton of Liverpool
Baroness Barker
Apsana Begum MP
Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP
Lord Bird

Rt Hon Dame Diana Johnson MP
Kim Johnson MP
Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb
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