

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S REACTION TO PFIZER'S LICENSE AGREEMENT FOR PAXLOVID WITH THE MEDICINES PATENT POOL

On 16 November, Pfizer Inc. (Pfizer) announced it had reached an agreement with the Medicines Patent Pool, a United Nations-backed public health organisation, to allow the generic production of its new oral Covid-19 antiviral treatment candidate, Paxlovid, in low- and middle-income countries.

This is an important, but far too limited step forward, that should not obscure Pfizer's record of obstructing access to its Covid-19 vaccine, that was developed in partnership with the German biotech firm, BioNTech.

Under its agreement, the Medicines Patent Pool will be able to grant licenses for the manufacturing of Paxlovid for retail in 95 specified countries, covering more than half the world's population.<sup>1</sup> Pfizer announced that it will not receive royalties on sales in low-income countries and will further waive royalties on sales in all countries covered by the agreement while COVID-19 remains classified as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the World Health Organization.<sup>2</sup>

In October, another US pharmaceutical company, Merck entered into a similar agreement with the Medicines Patent Pool for its antiviral Covid-19 treatment.

By opening the way for generic drug manufacturers, this deal should see an increase in global production of the potentially life-saving drugs, if they receive regulatory approval. But Pfizer's deal still excludes billions of people who are not living in countries covered by the agreement, such as middle income-countries Brazil, Peru, Iraq, Kazakhstan and Lebanon, in which the generic drugs cannot be sold.<sup>3</sup> Pfizer should address this omission and makes its antiviral drug more widely accessible.

But more importantly, this agreement stands in stark contrast to Pfizer's overall response to the pandemic.

As one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies, and manufacturer of one of only six WHO approved Covid-19 vaccines, Pfizer has a vital role to play.

Two years after the emergence of the deadly coronavirus, half the world's population have received at least one dose of the vaccine – a major milestone on the path to global vaccination. Yet a staggering 96% of people in low-income countries remain unvaccinated.

Despite its many pledges – some misleadingly phrased – Pfizer continues to reserve the bulk of its vaccines for higher income countries.<sup>4</sup> It is still refusing to participate in technology sharing initiatives, such as the South African-based WHO mRNA technology hub, and has lobbied vigorously against efforts to lift intellectual property restrictions. With projected earnings of US\$36bn from COVID-19 vaccines for 2021, Pfizer is putting profits before people, by obstructing efforts to make lifesaving vaccines available, accessible and affordable for all.

**Amnesty International's [100 Day Countdown](#) calls on states and pharmaceutical companies to share vaccines with low and lower-middle income countries - so that millions more people can be protected from Covid-19 in 2021.**

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<sup>1</sup> Medicine Patent Pool, Pfizer and The Medicines Patent Pool (MPP) Sign Licensing Agreement for COVID-19 Oral Antiviral Treatment Candidate to Expand Access in Low- and Middle-Income Countries, 16 November 2021, <https://medicinespatentpool.org/news-publications-post/pfizer-and-the-medicines-patent-pool-mpp-sign-licensing-agreement-for-covid-19-oral-antiviral-treatment-candidate-to-expand-access-in-low-and-middle-income-countries/>

<sup>2</sup> Pfizer, Pfizer and the Medicines Patent Pool (MPP) sign licensing agreement for Covid-19 oral antiviral treatment candidate to expand access in low- and middle-income countries, 16 November 2021.

<sup>3</sup> License agreement between Pfizer and MPP, Article 2 and Exhibit C, <https://medicinespatentpool.org/licence-post/pf-07321332/>

<sup>4</sup> Amnesty International, *Despite the rhetoric, Pfizer's failures continue to fuel human rights Covid-19 crisis*, 11 November 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/POL40/4969/2021/en/>