

Joint oral statement delivered by Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (CELS): Panel discussion on ensuring equitable, affordable, timely and universal access for all countries to vaccines in response to the Covid-19 pandemic

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Together with 20 organizations from various regions we commend member States and the Office of the High Commissioner for this important panel on access to Covid-19 vaccines.

As of today, only 13,6% of people in low-income countries and 19% of Africans have received at least one dose of vaccine. As rich countries administer 3rd and 4th doses as booster shots, many middle-income countries struggle to reach the goal of fully vaccinating 50% of their population. This divide has a strong racial connotation, reinforcing structural racial divisions at the global level.

Delegates, it is time for this Council to truly engage in the debate regarding intellectual property rights and technology transfer not only for COVID-19 vaccines, but also tests, medicines and other technologies needed to treat the virus.

As we know, the pandemic has huge human rights impacts, from the high death toll to the loss of jobs and income, lack of access to education, mental health issues and domestic violence, among others. Poverty and inequality within and between countries have greatly increased.

Despite widespread calls for treating Covid vaccines as a common public good, a small group of States including Switzerland, Germany, France, the UK, Sweden and the United States, as well as the EU, and pharmaceutical companies based in these countries are failing to engage in international cooperation to end the pandemic. They have failed to even meet their modest pledge of vaccine donations through COVAX. Nor have they engaged in the WHO-organized Technology Access Pool (C-TAP).

A Temporary Waiver of the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) being discussed at the World Trade Organization would allow us to reduce monopolies and enhance access, but it has been blocked by the same States for more than a year.

As this Council debates a new resolution on this topic, we ask you to consider moving beyond general declarations and towards supporting concrete steps for international cooperation to protect human rights over profit. This is not a commercial discussion. It is still possible to reverse this trend and set a precedent for future global crises.

- 1- Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (Argentina)
- 2 - Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights
- 3 - Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Network (ESCR-Net)
- 4 - International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
- 5 - CIVICUS
- 6 - International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAW AP)

- 7- Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)
- 8 - Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR)
9. Amnesty International
10. Justiça Global (Brasil)
11. Sexual Rights Initiative (SRI)
12. Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR)
13. Global Network of Movement Lawyers, Movement Law Lab
14. Dejusticia (Colombia)
15. Irish Council for Civil Liberties
16. Canadian Civil Liberties Association
17. Kenya Human Rights Commission
18. American Civil Liberties Union
19. Hungarian Civil Liberties Union
20. Human Rights Law Network (India)
21. Legal Resources Centre (South Africa)