



The Hon. Mark Butler
Minister for Health and Aged Care
Parliament House, Canberra
March 15, 2024

Cc Senator Penny Wong, Minister for Foreign Affairs; Senator Don Farrell, Minister for Trade and Tourism

Dear Minister Butler,

Re: Australian support for positive proposals in WHO pandemic agreement negotiations

The undersigned organisations are writing to you because of our commitment to a meaningful WHO Pandemic Agreement which will build on the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic and enable an improved response for future pandemics.

Global inequities in access to COVID-related medicines were a “catastrophic moral failure”, as the World Health Organization warned in [January 2021](#). The WHO Pandemic Agreement is the opportunity to improve future global responses. Australia should strongly support successful conclusion of these negotiations with meaningful outcomes.

Australia can play a positive role in its capacity as the co-facilitator of the Working Group on Access and Benefit Sharing and more generally in the negotiations.

We urge you to support the following proposals in the negotiations:

- Support developing countries’ demands on access and benefit sharing for equitable access to pandemic products, technology sharing and capacity building in return for sharing data on emerging pathogens and genomic sequencing.
- Support proposals to make public funding for research and development (R&D) of pandemic-related products conditional on sharing of intellectual property, technology and know-how, and include terms and conditions in contracts related to prices of products.
- Support a temporary waiver on relevant WTO TRIPs provisions for pandemic-related products. If this is not agreed by others, Australia should support expansion of compulsory licensing and other flexibilities which would enable increased production of pandemic-related products at affordable prices for developing countries.
- Support technology transfer for manufacturing of pandemic-related products in low- and middle-income countries.
- Support treating pandemics as a security issue, to enable the policy space for governments to enact appropriate public health measures.

- Support the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) amendments which relate to UN-recognised fundamental rights, social protections, occupational health and safety, and decent work. Drawing on the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic response, the agreement must recognise the indispensable contribution of essential workers and the risks they face, and that protecting the workforce is essential to protecting public health.

Clauses that support improved access to pandemic-related products should be in the strongest possible enforceable language.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely



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This letter is endorsed by:

Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network (AFTINET)
Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU)
Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) Australia
Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA)
Public Services International (PSI)