

GENEVA (9 November 2020) - UN human rights experts today criticised countries that are trying to monopolise any future vaccine against COVID-19, saying the only way to fight the pandemic is to make affordable vaccines available to everyone in the world.

“There is no room for nationalism in fighting this pandemic,” they said in a [statement](#) on universal access to vaccines. “This pandemic, with its global scale and enormous human cost, with no clear end in sight, requires a concerted, human-rights based and courageous response from all States.”

Their assessment contains guidance and recommendations for countries to help prevent and contain COVID-19.

“Unfortunately, some governments are trying to secure vaccines only for their own citizens,” the experts said, adding this would prove counterproductive because a successful fight against the pandemic depends on mass immunization.

“Viruses do not respect borders,” the experts said. “No one is secure until all of us are secure in an interconnected and interdependent world.

“Countries that strike deals to secure vaccines for their own population instead of engaging in a coordinated global effort to share them across borders, will not achieve their intended purpose.”

They called on countries to support the COVAX initiative for global equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines led by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and the World Health Organization.

“Under international human rights law, access to any COVID-19 vaccine and treatment must be made available to all who need them, within and across countries, especially those in vulnerable situations or living in poverty,” the experts said.

They also called for international cooperation and assistance between developed and developing countries to ensure widespread sharing of health technologies and know-how on COVID-19 vaccines and treatment.

In addition, the experts said, pharmaceutical companies also have a responsibility to respect human rights. They should not put profits ahead of people’s rights to life and health, and should accept restrictions on patent protection of vaccines they develop.

They welcomed the petition to the World Trade Organization by India and South Africa to

waive certain provisions of the agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) in order to improve prevention, containment and treatment of COVID-19.

“This pandemic has affected the whole world,” the experts said. “Now the world must put aside misplaced individual initiatives to monopolise vaccines and supplies, and work together to defeat it.”

ENDS

The experts: **Tlaleng Mofokeng**, [*Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health*](#); **Olivier de Schutter**, [*Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights*](#); **Anita Ramasastry** (Chair), **Dante Pesce** (Vice-Chair), **Surya Deva**, **Elżbieta Karska**, and **Githu Muigai**, [*Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises*](#); **Obiora C. Okafor**, [*Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity*](#), and **Saad Alfarargi**, [*Special Rapporteur on the right to development*](#).

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