

PRESS RELEASE

Wednesday, 17th November 2021

Scientific and medical experts call on Government to commit to addressing global vaccine inequity

- Prof Kingston Mills, Prof Sam McConkey, Prof Cliona Ni Cheallaigh and Prof Luke O'Neill among signatories making the call -

More than 350 leading scientists and medical professionals to date have signed a public statement urging the Irish Government to support the generic production of Covid-19 vaccines and treatments to address global vaccine inequity.

The statement published today (17.11.21) comes just 14 days before the World Trade Organisation (WTO) will decide upon the proposal to suspend intellectual property (IP) rights for vaccines, diagnostics and treatment of Covid 19 (TRIPS Waiver).

The call is being issued to coincide with an event today with leading Irish and international experts organised by [Oxfam Ireland](#), [Amnesty International Ireland](#), Doctors for Vaccine Equity and the Irish Global Health Network as part of the People's Vaccine Alliance in Ireland.

The public statement is calling for four actions to be taken by the Irish Government and the international community.

Key Actions for Global Vaccine Equity

Signatories of the public statement, including Professor Kingston Mills, Professor Sam McConkey, Professor Cliona Ni Cheallaigh, and Professor Luke O'Neill, are calling on the government to commit to four specific actions:

1. Support the TRIPS waiver to allow vaccine production in low- and middle-income countries as a sustainable solution.
2. Ensure vaccine makers facilitate the open sharing of know-how and tech transfer to all relevant vaccine producers to increase vaccine production. This should be done through the World Health Organisation (WHO) COVID Technology Access Pool (C-TAP).
3. Facilitate urgent global redistribution of current vaccine supplies and commit to rational purchasing to avoid vaccine hoarding and wastage.
4. Ensure that any strategy for booster vaccines is evidence based and ethical within a global context.

The statement calls for the distribution of vaccines to be based upon public health need rather than commercial gain, hence the proposal to the WTO to suspend IP rights temporarily on Covid 19 related health technologies. According to the signatories, Ireland could have an immediate short-term impact by redistributing surplus vaccines.

To date, less than one percent of all manufactured vaccine doses have gone to low-income countries

Human Rights Issue

Speaking today on the launch of the statement, CEO of Oxfam Ireland Jim Clarken said: "We are all acutely aware of the extraordinary scientific effort, heavily supported by public funding, that brought a number of vaccines into being in the shortest time in history and the positive impact they are having here at home.

“However, in many parts of the world it may be years before populations are vaccinated. The unwillingness to waive patents, as a temporary measure, is costing lives and livelihoods, and will ensure that this pandemic lasts far longer and causes far more human suffering and economic damage than it already has. This is a human rights issue and a completely unacceptable situation given that we have the knowledge required to protect millions of people.

“The western world is now moving to booster campaigns for the vaccinated, yet billions of vulnerable people are yet to receive a first dose. Western countries are once again hoarding vaccines at the expense of poorer countries. But this does not have to be a discussion on who the vaccines being produced are given to. Rather, waiving patents would dramatically boost global production and supply of lifesaving vaccines, treatments, tests and other health tools - for everyone, everywhere.

“We are calling on the Government today to support the TRIPS waiver at ongoing World Trade Organisation negotiations, and to effectively and efficiently redistribute the huge quantity of surplus vaccines with have access to over the coming months.

Also commenting on launch of the statement was Professor Cliona Ní Cheallaigh, Consultant in Infectious Diseases at St James’s Hospital and Associate Professor at TCD who said: “Our experience with HIV clearly demonstrated that we cannot ignore disease prevention and control in the Global South without it impacting on disease control and prevention in the Global North.

“We urgently need to share the know-how, reagents and technology needed for production of COVID vaccines with many companies in the Global South who are ready and willing to produce vaccines. Until we do this, we will continue to face new variants and we, as well as those living in the Global South, will be facing the consequences of protecting the financial returns of vaccine companies at the expense of human lives for years to come.”

For the full public statement please go [here](#), and for the full list of medical and scientific expert signatories, please go [here](#).

ENDS

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Notes to Editors:

Spokespeople: Both Jim Clarken and Professor Cliona Ní Cheallaigh, as is Colm O’Gorman of Amnesty International Ireland are available for comment.

About Oxfam Ireland:

Oxfam, a founding member the global People’s Vaccine Campaign, while Oxfam Ireland is a founding member of the People’s Vaccine Alliance Ireland, which is calling on the Irish Government to:

- Ireland must use its voice within the EU to support the TRIPS waiver - Call on governments to temporarily suspend intellectual property rights at the World Trade Organisation for Covid-19 vaccines, treatments and diagnostics. This will help break Big Pharma monopolies and increase supplies so there are enough doses for everyone, everywhere. For more info, click [here](#) and [here](#).

- Ireland must endorse the World Health Organisation (WHO) COVID Technology Access Pool (C-TAP) to facilitate the sharing of know-how by pharmaceutical companies to increase vaccine production.

About The People's Vaccine Alliance

The People's Vaccine Alliance Ireland membership includes: Access to Medicines Ireland, ACET, Action Aid Ireland, Amnesty International Ireland, AMRI, Centre for Global Education , Christian Aid Ireland, Comhlamh, Doctors for Vaccine Equity, Friends of the Earth Ireland, GOAL, Gorey Malawi Health Partnership, ICCL, Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Irish General Practice Nurses Educational Association, Irish Global Health Network, Irish National Teachers' Organisation, Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation, Misean Cara, Oxfam Ireland, Plan International Ireland, Trinity Centre for Global Health, Trócaire, Voluntary Service International, 80:20 Educating and Acting for a Better World.