



## **PRESS STATEMENT**

CHRI supports India and South Africa call for COVID-19 vaccine waiver for marginalised and most vulnerable, urges the Commonwealth Secretariat to take lead

New Delhi, November 30 – Equity and priority for the marginalised and most vulnerable in all countries must be the lodestone for the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine when it is ready for mass distribution, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) said today.

Urging the Commonwealth Secretariat to take this lead, based on the organisation's guiding principles of human rights, non-discrimination and equality, the CHRI today threw its support to the call by India and South Africa, with support from Kenya, Eswatini, Pakistan and Mozambique to ensure that manufacturers and governments put people before power, price and profit when the production and distribution of the vaccine begins.

“Clearly the front line warriors against the disease – health workers, police and sanitation workers as well as those distributing food and providing care to people at risk must be the priority recipients,” said Sanjoy Hazarika, International Director of CHRI.

Since 1987, CHRI has worked for the practical realisation of human rights through research, strategic advocacy, capacity building, engagement and mobilisation within the Commonwealth. It is a Commonwealth Accredited Organisation and has a Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

In a communication today to Commonwealth Secretary-General, H.E. Mme. Patricia Scotland, PC, QC, Hazarika stressed that “marginalised and most vulnerable groups must be on the priority list of recipients in all Commonwealth countries, irrespective of age, gender, race, religion or nationality.”

“However, it is most distressing to note that States such as Canada, Australia and the UK, along with some other European Union (EU) States, are among the World Trade Organisation (WTO) members seeking to block efforts by several Commonwealth Members States to secure a TRIPS waiver for COVID-19 vaccines, so that there is equitable access for all across the globe,” he said.



The Agreement on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) is an international legal agreement between all the member nations of the WTO which sets the minimum standard of regulations for different forms of intellectual property. It protects patents and copyrights including those applicable to new diagnostics, vaccines, medicines and medical supplies. The European Union has said, according to reports, that “the proposed waiver would put in question the ongoing investments and efforts undertaken by researchers to develop the vaccine at an unprecedented speed.”

**Read the full letter to the Commonwealth Secretary-General [here](#).**

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