

Open Letter: Former Heads of State and Nobel Laureates Call on President Biden To Waive Intellectual Property Rules for COVID Vaccines



People's Vaccine Alliance

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Dear President Biden,

We the undersigned former Heads of State and Government and Nobel Laureates are gravely concerned by the very slow progress in scaling up global COVID-19 vaccine access and inoculation in low- and middle-income countries.

The world saw unprecedented development of safe and effective vaccines, in major part thanks to U.S. public investment. We all welcome that vaccination rollout in the U.S. and many wealthier countries is bringing hope to their citizens.

Yet for the majority of the world that same hope is yet to be seen. New waves of suffering are now rising across the globe. Our global economy cannot rebuild if it remains vulnerable to this virus.

But we are encouraged by news that your Administration is considering a temporary waiver of World Trade Organization (WTO) intellectual property rules during the COVID-19 pandemic, as proposed by South Africa and India, and supported by more than 100 WTO member states and numerous health experts worldwide.

A WTO waiver is a vital and necessary step to bringing an end to this pandemic. It must be combined with ensuring vaccine know-how and technology is shared openly. This can be achieved through the World Health Organization COVID-19 Technology Access Pool, as your Chief Medical Advisor, Dr. Anthony Fauci, has called for. This will save lives and advance us towards global herd immunity.

These actions would expand global manufacturing capacity, unhindered by industry monopolies that are driving the dire supply shortages blocking vaccine access. 9 in 10 people in most poor countries may well go without a vaccine this year. At this

pace, many nations will be left waiting until at least 2024 to achieve mass COVID-19 immunization, despite what the limited, while welcome, COVAX initiative is able to offer.

These moves should be accompanied by coordinated global investment in research, development, and manufacturing capacity to tackle this pandemic and prepare us for future ones, as part of a more robust international health architecture. If this last year has taught us anything, it is that threats to public health are global, and that strategic government investment, action, global cooperation, and solidarity are vital. The market cannot adequately meet these challenges, and neither can narrow nationalism.

The full protection of intellectual property and monopolies will only negatively impact efforts to vaccinate the world and be self-defeating for the U.S. Given artificial global supply shortages, the U.S. economy already risks losing \$1.3 trillion in GDP this year. Were the virus left to roam the world, and even if vaccinated, people in the U.S. would continue to be exposed to new viral variants.

Mr. President, our world learned painful lessons from unequal access to lifesaving treatments for diseases such as HIV. By supporting a TRIPS waiver, the U.S. will provide an example of responsible leadership at a time when it is needed most on global health — as it has done so before on HIV, saving millions of lives. Your support in rallying allies and all countries to follow your lead will also be essential.

With your leadership, we can ensure COVID-19 vaccine technology is shared with the world. Supporting the emergency waiver of COVID-19 related intellectual property rules will give people around the globe a chance to wake up to a world free from the virus. We need a people's vaccine.

Many of us know, first-hand, the reality of political office and the pressures, challenges and constraints of leadership. However, we believe this would be an unparalleled opportunity for the U.S. to exercise solidarity, cooperation and renewed leadership, one we hope will inspire many more to do the same.

Please take the urgent action that only you can, and let this moment be remembered in history as the time we chose to put the collective right to safety for all ahead of the commercial monopolies of the few.

Let us now ensure an end to this pandemic for us all. As advocates for global and equitable vaccine access, we remain ready to support and add our voices to your efforts on this front.

Signed,

Peter Agre — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (2003)

Esko Aho — Prime Minister of Finland (1991–1995) ¹

Harvey J. Alter — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (2020)

Hiroshi Amano — Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics (2014)

Werner Arber — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (1978)

Shaukat Aziz — Prime Minister of Pakistan (2004–2007) ²

Rosalía Arteaga — President of Ecuador (1997) ²

Joyce Banda — President of the Republic of Malawi (2012–2014) ¹

Françoise Barré-Sinoussi — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (2008)

Sali Berisha — President of Albania (1992–1997), Prime Minister (2005–2013) ²

Valdis Birkavs — Prime Minister of Latvia (1993–1994) ¹

Elizabeth H. Blackburn — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (2009)

Kjell Magne Bondevik — Prime Minister of Norway (1997–2000; 2001–2005) ¹

Ouided Bouchamaoui — Nobel Peace Prize Laureate with the Tunisian Quintet (2015) ³

Gordon Brown — Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
(2007–2010) ¹ ²

Kim Campbell — Prime Minister of Canada (1993) ¹

Mario R. Capecchi — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (2007)

Fernando Henrique Cardoso — President of Brazil (1995–2003)
¹

Martin Chalfie — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (2008)

Joaquim Chissano — President of Mozambique (1986–2005) ¹

Helen Clark — Prime Minister of New Zealand (1999–2008) ¹ ²

Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca — President of Malta (2014–2019) ¹
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Emil Constantinescu — President of Romania (1996–2000) ²

Mairead Corrigan Maguire — Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (1976)

Mirko Cvetković — Prime Minister of Serbia (2008–2012) ²

Luisa Diogo — Prime Minister of Mozambique (2004–2010) ¹

Peter Doherty — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (1996)

Shirin Ebadi — Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (2003) ³

Mohamed ElBaradei — Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (2005) ³

François Englert — Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics (2013)

Gerhard Ertl — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (2007)

Adolfo Pérez Esquivel — Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (1980)

Mohamed Fadhel Mahfoudh -Nobel Peace Prize Laureate with the Tunisian Quintet (2015) ³

Andrew Z. Fire — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (2006)

Edmond Henri Fischer — Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine (1992) ³

Jan Fischer — Prime Minister of the Czech Republic (2009–2010) ²

Joachim Frank — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (2017)

Chiril Gaburici — Prime Minister of Moldova (2015) ²

Leymah Gbowee — Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (2011) ³

Andre Geim — Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics (2010)

Sheldon Glashow — Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics (1979)

Joseph L. Goldstein — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (1985)

Mikhail Gorbachev — Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (1990);
President of the Soviet Union (1985–1991) ³

David J. Gross — Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics (2004)

Dalia Grybauskaitė — President of Lithuania (2009–2019) ¹

Ameenah Gurib-Fakim — President of Mauritius (2015–2018) ²

Alfred Gusenbauer — Chancellor of Austria (2007–2008) ¹

Jeffrey Connor Hall — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (2017)

John L. Hall — Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics (2005)

Tarja Halonen — President of Finland (2000–2012) ^{1 2}

Leland H. Hartwell — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (2001)

Richard Henderson — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (2017)

Dudley R. Herschbach — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry
(1986)

Jules A. Hoffmann — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (2011)

Roald Hoffmann — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (1981)

François Hollande — President of France (2012–2017)

Tasuku Honjo — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (2018)

Gerardus 't Hooft — Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics (1999)

Michael Houghton — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (2020)

Robert Huber — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (1988)

Tim Hunt — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (2001)

Louis J. Ignarro — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (1998)

Dalia Itzik — President of Israel (2007) ²

Mladen Ivanić — President of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2014–2018) ²

Gjorge Ivanov — President of North Macedonia (2009–2019) ²

Elfriede Jelinek — Nobel Prize Laureate in Literature (2004)

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf — President of Liberia (2006–2018)

Mehdi Jomaa — Prime Minister of Tunisia (2014–2015) ¹

Brian D. Josephson — Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics (1973)

Ivo Josipović — President of Croatia (2010–2015) ^{1 2}

Takaaki Kajita — Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics (2015)

Eric R. Kandel — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (2000)

Tawakkol Karman — Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (2011) ³

Wolfgang Ketterle — Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics (2001)

Kolinda Grabar Kitarović — President of Croatia (2015–2020) ²

Roger D. Kornberg — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (2006)

Jadranka Kosor — Prime Minister of Croatia (2009–2011) ²

Leonid Kuchma — President of Ukraine (1994–2005) ²

Aleksander Kwaśniewski — President of Poland (1995–2005) ¹

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Finn E. Kydland — Nobel Prize in Economics (2004)

Ricardo Lagos — President of Chile (2000–2006) ¹

Zlatko Lagumdžija — Prime Minister of Bosnia Herzegovina
(2001–2002) ^{1 2}

Yuan T. Lee — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (1986)

Robert J. Lefkowitz — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (2012)

Anthony J. Leggett — Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics (2003)

Jean-Marie Lehn — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (1987)

Yves Leterme — Prime Minister of Belgium (2008, 2009–2011)

1 2

Tomas Lindahl — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (2015)

Petru Lucinschi — President of Moldova (1997–2001) 2

Igor Lukšić — Prime Minister of Montenegro (2010–2012) 2

Roderick MacKinnon — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (2003)

Mauricio Macri — President of Argentina (2015–2019) 1

Moussa Mara — Prime Minister of Mali (2014–2015) 2

Giorgi Margvelashvili — President of Georgia (2013–2018) 2

Eric S. Maskin — Nobel Prize in Economics (2007)

John C. Mather — Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics (2006)

Michel Mayor — Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics (2019)

Arthur B. McDonald — Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics (2015)

Péter Medgyessy — Prime Minister of Hungary (2002–2004) ²

Rexhep Meidani — President of Albania (1977–2002) ^{1 2}

Craig C. Mello — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (2006)

Rigoberta Menchu — Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (1992) ³

Carlos Mesa — President of Bolivia (2003–2005) ¹

James Michel — President of the Seychelles (2004–2016) ¹

William E. Moerner — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry
(2014)

Mario Monti — Prime Minister of Italy (2011–2013) ¹

Edvard Moser — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (2014)

May-Britt Moser — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (2014)

Dr. Denis Mukwege — Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (2018) ³

Herta Muller — Nobel Prize Laureate in Literature (2009)

Nadia Murad Basee Taha — Nobel Peace Laureate (2018) ³

Joseph Muscat — Prime Minister of Malta (2013–2020) ²

Bujar Nishani — President of Albania (2012–2017) ²

Ryoji Noyori — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (2001)

Olusegun Obasanjo — President of Nigeria (1976–1979; 1999–2007) ¹

John O’Keefe — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (2014)

Djoomart Otorbaev — Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan (2014–2015) ²

Orhan Pamuk — Nobel Prize Laureate in Literature (2006)

JP Patterson — Prime Minister of Jamaica (1992–2006) ¹

Edmund S. Phelps — Nobel Prize in Economics (2006)

William D. Phillips — Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics (1997)

Christopher A. Pissarides — Nobel Prize in Economics (2010)

Rosen Plevneliev — President of Bulgaria (2012–2017) ²

John C. Polanyi — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (1986)

Romano Prodi — Prime Minister of Italy (1996–1998; 2006–2008) ¹

Stanley B. Prusiner — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (1997)

Jorge Tuto Quiroga — President of Bolivia (2001–2002) ¹

Iveta Radičová — Prime Minister of Slovakia (2010–2012) ¹

Venkatraman Ramakrishnan — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (2009)

José Manuel Ramos-Horta — President of Timor-Leste (2007–2012) & Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (1996) ¹

Charles M. Rice — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (2020)

Sir Richard J. Roberts — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (1993)

Mary Robinson — President of Ireland (1990–1997)

José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero — President of the Government of Spain (2004–2011) ¹

Petre Roman — Prime Minister of Romania (1989–1991) ^{1 2}

Michael Rosbash — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (2017)

Juan Manuel Santos — President of Colombia (2010–2018) & Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (2016)

Kailash Satyarthi — Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (2014) ²

Jean-Pierre Sauvage — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (2016)

Brian P. Schmidt — Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics (2011)

Gregg L. Semenza — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (2019)

Jenny Shipley — Prime Minister of New Zealand (1997–1999) ¹

Stanislav Shushkevich — President of Belarus (1991–1994) ²

Vernon L. Smith — Nobel Prize Laureate in Economics (2002)

Wole Soyinka — Nobel Prize Laureate in Literature (1986)

A. Michael Spence — Nobel Prize Laureate in Economics (2001)

Joseph E. Stiglitz — Nobel Prize Laureate in Economics (2001)

Sir James Fraser Stoddart — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (2016)

Horst L. Stormer — Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics (1998)

Petar Stoyanov — President of Bulgaria (1997–2002) ²

Laimdota Straujuma — Prime Minister of Latvia (2014–2016) ²

Alexander Stubb — Prime Minister of Finland (2014–2015) ¹

Boris Tadić — President of Serbia (2004–2012) ²

Kip Stephen Thorne — Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics (2017)

Susumu Tonegawa — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (1987)

Martín Torrijos — President of Panama (2004–2009) ¹

Elbegdorj Tsakhia — President of Mongolia (2009–2017) ¹

Danilo Türk — President of Slovenia (2007–2012) & President of Club de Madrid¹

Archbishop Desmond Tutu — Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (1984) ³

Cassam Uteem — President of Mauritius (1992–2002) ¹

Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga — President of Latvia (1999–2007) & Co-Chair Nizami Ganjavi International Center (NGIC) ²

Filip Vujanović — President of Montenegro (2003–2018) ²

Lech Wałęsa — Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (1983); President of Poland (1990–1995) ³

Arieh Warshel — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (2013)

Torsten N. Wiesel — Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine (1981)

Jody Williams — Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (1997)

M. Stanley Whittingham — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (2019)

Sir Gregory P. Winter — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (2018)

Robert Woodrow Wilson — Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics (1978)

Kurt Wuthrich — Nobel Prize Laureate in Chemistry (2002)

Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo — Nobel Peace Laureate (1996) ³

Malala Yousafzai — Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (2014) ³

Muhammad Yunus — Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (2006) ³

Viktor Yushchenko — President of Ukraine (2005–2010) ²

Valdis Zatlers — President of Latvia (2007–2011) ²

¹ Member of Club de Madrid

² Member of Nizami Ganjavi International Center (NGIC)

³ Courtesy of Yunus Centre, Bangladesh