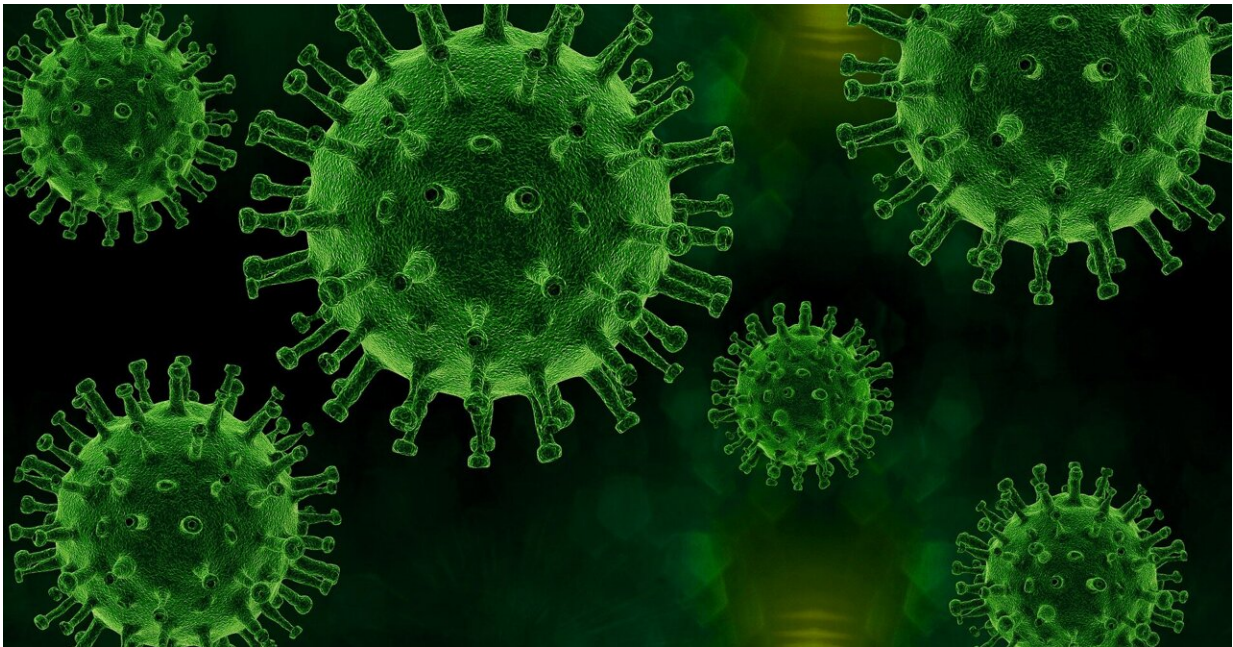


WTO postpones decision on Covid-linked patent waiver

December 16 2022



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

World Trade Organization members agreed Friday to push back Saturday's deadline on whether to expand an agreed patent waiver for COVID-19 vaccines to tests and treatments, drawing fierce criticism from NGOs.

During the WTO's ministerial meeting in June, all 164 members finally agreed after two years of bruising negotiations to temporarily lift patents

on COVID-19 vaccines.

The idea was to boost global production and help address the glaring inequity in access to the jabs.

The agreement granted developing countries the right to produce COVID vaccines for five years "without the consent of the right holder".

But it fell short of initial demands for the waiver to apply to all countries and to cover COVID tests and treatments.

Under the terms of that deal, WTO members had six months to decide whether to extend the measures to also "cover the production and supply of COVID-19 diagnostics and therapeutics".

Since then however, it has been stalemate.

Members have spent months wrangling and hours this week alone debating a factual statement on the need for extending the looming deadline, according a Geneva-based trade official.

In the end, the WTO's Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) managed to agree to recommend to the WTO General Council meeting next week to "extend the deadline". That agreement came just a day before time ran out Saturday.

A previous, longer version of the text had suggested a six-month extension, but the final version made no reference to a timeline.

Public interest groups, already harshly critical of the original deal for not going far enough, were outraged by the decision.

"We are nearly three years into the COVID-19 pandemic," Max Lawson,

co-chair of the People's Vaccine Alliance, said a statement.

"As many as seventeen million people are estimated to have died in the time that the WTO has bickered over intellectual property rules for tests and treatments.

"To say that more time is needed to consider the issue is utter nonsense," he added.

"WTO members have decided to let another year pass without making any meaningful contribution to the fight against COVID-19."

© 2022 AFP

Citation: WTO postpones decision on Covid-linked patent waiver (2022, December 16) retrieved 3 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-12-wto-postpones-decision-covid-linked-patent.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.