

UN committee urges rich world to lift COVID jab patents

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A UN anti-racism committee on Thursday urged rich countries—particularly Britain, Germany, Switzerland and the United States—to waive coronavirus vaccine patents and said they violated a guarantee against racial discrimination.

In June 2022, World Trade Organization member countries reached an agreement authorizing developing nations to lift COVID-19 vaccine patents for five years, but further talks on the issue have stalled.

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, a group of 18 independent human rights experts whose views are not binding, said the deal has not done enough to reduce disparities.

According to the latest WHO data, 32 percent of the world's population has received at least one booster or additional vaccine dose, but in some developing nations the figure is less than one percent, it said.

Rich countries' "persistent refusal" to waive [intellectual property rights](#) "raises concerns" about their obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the committee added.

It said COVID-19 remained a serious public health issue with "devastating" impacts falling disproportionately on people of African or Asian descent, ethnic minorities, Roma communities and Indigenous peoples.

The inequality could be "significantly mitigated" by sharing access to intellectual property rights to life-serving vaccines, treatments and technologies "currently reserved by a few countries in the global North", it said.

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