

341st Session of the ILO Governing Body

Statement of the ILO Workers' Group on vaccine equity as a precondition for a sustainable and socially just recovery

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In the context of the current pandemic, the Workers' Group in the ILO calls on the ILO constituents and Office to join efforts to realize for all the inalienable human right to life and health, including in the developing and implementation of recovery plans.

In the face of this global emergency, it is urgent and mandatory to "Save Lives and Protect Jobs", in the understanding that we must protect livelihoods and decent jobs.

Vaccines and other vital tools to save lives in the pandemic are a common good of humanity. A huge amount of public money has been invested in their development, in particular when it comes to vaccines. Universal, free and immediate access to safe and tested vaccines for all people in the world must now be a priority, with fair distribution across all levels of society.

We oppose vaccine nationalism. Governments should give a clear signal towards their commitment to SDG 3, through an immediate suspension of patents on COVID-19 vaccines, tests, treatments and other public health tools. The waiver on patents was adopted to be used in public health emergencies and the WHO Director General has called for its use. If this is not a public health emergency, then what is?

This should come hand in hand with transfer of technologies and inputs needed for vaccine production in all regions, so that more countries can start their own production of COVID-19 vaccines and other necessary medical products to bring the pandemic under control.

Universal access to medicines, tests, PPE supplies, software and equipment, necessary for prevention and the treatment of patients affected by COVID-19 and all other illnesses, for which humanity has developed solutions a long time ago, needs to become a reality for all people.

If we do not act now, the unequal access to vaccines will further exacerbate existing inequalities in the world of work and globally between countries and regions, threatening to undo decades of progress on reducing poverty and achieving decent work for all.

Now is the time to act! It is Time to show that we must indeed put People before Profit, in the interest of a sustainable and equitable recovery everywhere.