

COVID-19: European Commission gives lacklustre response to legitimate civil society concerns

Along with over 200 other civil society organisations, on 29th June we wrote to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. In [our letter](#), we requested that the European Union (EU) engage in text-based negotiations on South Africa and India's TRIPS waiver proposal and that they should avoid further disruptions of the multilateral dialogue.

In its [response of 16th July](#), the Commission not only fails to address the main questions raised in our letter but insists on perpetuating a narrative that avoids any mention of the devastating effect that withholding of knowledge and technology has in the midst of a pandemic. It is a matter of concern that the only purported solutions the EU suggests are either already part of the TRIPS agreement (which are not working) or long-term projections, with no bearing to the reality endured by many countries that remain in the grip of COVID-19. Meanwhile, the European delegation continues to block progress at the World Trade Organization (WTO) by refusing to participate meaningfully in deliberations on a text that is supported by over 60 sovereign states.

Our voice is just one of many expressing dismay at the disregard the European Commission shows for the [resolution](#) approved by the European Parliament on 10th June. A resolution which explicitly calls for EU support for proactive, constructive, and text-based negotiations for a temporary waiver of the WTO TRIPS Agreement to enhance global access to affordable COVID-19 related medical products and to address global production constraints and supply shortages".

As negotiations on the proposal submitted by India and South Africa progress at WTO, is it too much to expect the EU to remain true to the moral values upon which effective leadership is built?