

(O'Connor, 2021)

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# NZ backs moves to improve global access to COVID vaccines

**HON DAMIEN O'CONNOR(/MINISTER/HON-DAMIEN-CONNOR)**

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New Zealand welcomes and strongly supports the announcement made by the United States Trade Representative to work for a waiver of IP protections on COVID-19 vaccines at the WTO, Trade Minister Damien O'Connor said.

"New Zealand supports equitable access to COVID vaccines for all. No one is safe from the virus until everyone is safe from it, so it is in all our interest to remove any blocks to access and distribution of the vaccine," Damien O'Connor said.

"New Zealand supports the waiver of IP protections on vaccines as an important part of our collective efforts to address the human catastrophe of the pandemic.

"The Government has been actively engaged in discussions at the WTO on the TRIPS waiver and we welcome the US announcement and look forward to taking this forward with urgency.

"In addition to removing barriers to speedy access to the vaccine via the WTO, New Zealand continues to strongly support the COVAX Facility, which is playing a critical role to ensure vaccines reach all corners of the globe.

"New Zealand has contributed \$17 million in Official Development Assistance to support these efforts, and is sharing 1.668 million vaccine doses (sufficient for over 800,000 people) to COVAX for distribution to developing countries. This is in addition to our direct support for vaccine access for Pacific Island countries.

“We are also working in APEC, the WTO and other fora to address other elements of vaccine supply issues including through the supply chains that are limiting the availability of vaccines regionally and globally.

“This includes our collective and urgent need to address tariff barriers, regulatory restrictions, export restrictions and enable trade facilitation measures that could facilitate swift access to vaccines and their effective distribution. We also need to do all we can to increase the manufacture, distribution and availability of vaccines.

“In less than a month, on 5 June, I will chair a meeting of all 21 APEC trade ministers. I want our region to send a united message to the world that we must get all our people vaccinated as fast as possible and that trade must be a part of the solution to avoid more human suffering and economic pain,” Damien O’Connor said.



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