

Director General's Opening Remarks at the Launch of the WIPO Patent Landscape Report on COVID-19 Related Vaccines and Therapeutics

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Your Excellency, Dr Tedros, Director-General of the World Health Organization,

Your Excellency, Dr Ngozi, Director-General of the World Trade Organization,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are more than two years into a global crisis that has disrupted economies, strained societies and undermined global public health.

Tragically, we have lost nearly 6 million people to this virus around the world.

And more than half a million lives just this year alone.

Despite the glimmer of light in the distance, we are not out of the COVID tunnel just yet.

In fact, the pandemic has widened existing cracks in our society and created new and troubling fault lines.

Global extreme poverty has increased for the first time in decades.

Food insecurity is on the rise.

And progress on critical issues, including gender equality and youth education, has gone into reverse.

The policy choices that we make in the coming months will shape the direction of our economies, societies and communities for a generation.

They will determine whether we can turn the ambitions of the Sustainable Development Goals into reality.

And they will decide whether we foster a truly global recovery, one that makes the whole world a safer, more resilient place.

When the stakes are this high, it is crucial that we learn the right lessons from the pandemic and that we have a clear understanding of what has worked well, what can be done differently and what must be improved.

In shining light on patenting activity and innovation and technology trends during the pandemic, this report is an important contribution to understanding how our systems have responded to COVID-19.

Three points stand out.

First, the report underlines that we have seen an unprecedented mobilization of the global scientific and research community.

In the first 21 months of the pandemic, inventors filed more than 5,000 patent applications relating to COVID-19, across 49 patent offices.

This included nearly 1,500 filings relating to therapeutics and over 400 filings relating to vaccines.

To put this in context, around 500 patent families relating to influenza vaccines emerged in the seventy years between 1941 and 2011.

Second, the report shines a light on the complementary and reinforcing roles played by companies, startups, universities and research institutions in the development of COVID-19 related vaccines and treatments.

The data in the report suggests that academic players have made a greater contribution to patenting activity than expected, with the patenting landscape evenly distributed between corporates on the one hand and universities and research institutions on the other.

And third, the report provides additional context on how pre-pandemic R&D laid the groundwork for an accelerated innovation response to the virus.

Science has never moved as fast as it has done over the last two years.

But it is important to remember that this speed has been built on a foundation of scientific research and R&D investment stretching over decades, which in turn, has been supported by the incentives provided by the global IP ecosystem.

But the innovations and tools developed with such speed will only bring the virus fully under control if they are accessible to everyone in the world.

That is why WIPO is fully committed to vaccine equity, and to working with our partners across the international community to ensure that the vaccines and therapeutics profiled in this report are available to everyone, everywhere.

I am, therefore, very pleased that DG Tedros and DG Ngozi are able to join us to launch this report.

In order to make progress against the global challenges of today and tomorrow, it is essential that international organizations collaborate closely across their mandates and policy domains.

That is why we have taken steps since June last year to strengthen the trilateral cooperation between the WHO, WTO and WIPO to help Member States overcome the pandemic.

It also complements WIPO's own COVID response package, where we are offering Member States a range of measures including tailored technical assistance and capacity building support, to help them overcome the pandemic and accelerate their recovery.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We hope that this patent landscape report provides researchers, decision makers and other interested parties, with insights into how the patent system has adapted and responded to the challenges of the last two years.

WIPO would like to thank the World Health Organization and the Medicines Patent Pool for their assistance with the report.

And we would like to reiterate our firm commitment to working with all our partners to bring the pandemic fully under control and to building a safer, fairer and more sustainable world.

Thank you very much.