

US supports waiver of Covid-19 vaccine IP restrictions

President Cyril Ramaphosa has welcomed the support of United States President Joe Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris for a temporary and targeted waiver of intellectual property protections that apply to Covid-19 vaccines.



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The United States government on Wednesday said that the Covid-19 pandemic is a global health crisis that calls for extraordinary measures.

The United States said it believes strongly in intellectual property protections. However, in service of ending the pandemic, it will at forthcoming negotiations of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) support the waiver of those protections for Covid-19 vaccines.

President Ramaphosa has welcomed the position adopted by the United States as an important reinforcement of a campaign led by South Africa and India on behalf of emerging economies that face vaccine shortages and production challenges.

In a statement on Thursday, President Ramaphosa said the anticipated temporary waiver provides a global response to Covid-19.

President Ramaphosa said the proposal establishes a global solution to enhance manufacturing and boost supply capacity, and enables coordination and access to information currently under patent protection.

“For countries that do not currently have manufacturing capacity on certain medical technologies, the waiver could open up more supply options and avoid countries being reliant on only one or two suppliers.

“Where supply capacity currently exists, it can be repurposed to Covid-vaccine production and in this way, improve the supply available to all nations,” President Ramaphosa said.

The President said the upcoming WTO negotiations provide the global community, especially leading economies, with both an opportunity and a challenge to act in the best interest of all humanity.

“This can be achieved by focusing on the moral, legal and economic benefits of providing urgent, affordable and equitable protection to all people around the world, in the face of a grave and indiscriminate threat to life and economic sustainability,” President Ramaphosa said.

In light of the growing global consensus, President Ramaphosa has called on pharmaceutical companies to facilitate sharing of know-how and technology to enable a rapid increase in supply capacity in order to save lives.

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