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Dear Stephen,

Thank you for your letter of 1 December 2020, on behalf of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on HIV & AIDS, in which you request a meeting to discuss the proposal submitted by India and South Africa regarding a waiver for provisions of the Agreement on the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement).

As you note, my Department and the Department for International Trade received a separate cross-party and cross-house letter on this issue and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Trade provided a response setting out the Government's position.

I reiterate that the UK remains committed to ensuring access for all to safe and effective, high-quality, and affordable vaccines, diagnostics, medicines, and other health technologies as part of an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Together with our international partners, we must consider how to practically meet the objectives of prevention, containment and treatment of COVID-19, as noted in India and South Africa's communication. Right now, the best way to provide equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines, treatments and tests is by fully funding the ACT-Accelerator. As a core pillar of the ACT-Accelerator, the COVAX facility has secured 2 billion doses of vaccines, for distribution to 190 countries, starting in Q1 2021. The UK Government is proud to have put in \$1 billion of the global total of \$5 billion raised so far to make this initiative a success but it needs an immediate extra \$4.5 billion and the UK is asking other major economies to join us in stepping up to the task.

While I note the points you set out in your letter in support of the proposal, multiple factors need to be considered to ensure equitable access for all to COVID-19 diagnostics, vaccines and therapeutics. These include increasing manufacturing and distribution capacity, measures to support or incentivise technology transfer, ensuring global supply chains remain open, and ensuring that effective platforms are utilised to voluntarily share IP and know how.

The Government continues to be of the view that pursuing the proposed waiver would be counterproductive and would undermine a framework that offers solutions to the issues at hand. There are existing and emerging mechanisms that can facilitate the sharing of IP and know-how through non-exclusive voluntary licensing. For example, the WHO COVID Technology Access Pool (C-TAP) is a mechanism

bringing together the experience of several existing initiatives including the Medicines Patent Pool to pool know-how and IP on a voluntary basis and make it available where and when needed. The UK is working to identify how this initiative can add value going forward.

As well as these mechanisms, a number of collaborative partnerships operating within the IP framework, and involving industry and institutions in developed and developing countries, are already making a practical difference to the global fight against COVID-19. AstraZeneca has reached a \$750 million agreement with CEPI and Gavi to support the manufacturing, procurement and distribution of 300 million doses of the vaccine developed with the University of Oxford. In addition, AstraZeneca reached a licensing and technology transfer agreement with Serum Institute of India to supply one billion doses for low and middle-income countries. Another initiative, Diatropix, is bringing together British and Senegalese partners to share technology to produce 10 million COVID-19 antibody tests by March 2021, for use across West Africa.

A waiver, however, may instead make it more difficult to achieve global access to a vaccine and other medical products needed to COVID-19 by making technology transfer supported by these voluntary licensing schemes more complex.

The UK is just one of many countries who are opposed to the waiver proposal. A number of developing countries have voiced their opposition to the proposal at the TRIPS Council and querying whether a waiver of the TRIPS Agreement is the most effective way to meet the objectives contained in the waiver proposal. While the Government welcomes discussion on this issue and acknowledges the concerns of India and South Africa as set out in their communication, we firmly believe that WTO members need to come together to focus on solutions to fight COVID-19 from within the TRIPS framework.

Unfortunately, due to the pressures of parliamentary business, I am unable to meet with you. However, I hope the above provides some reassurance of our commitment to addressing the global challenges presented by the pandemic.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amanda Solloway', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

AMANDA SOLLOWAY MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State - Minister for Science, Research, and Innovation