Ms Věra Jourová,
Vice President of the European Commission for Values and Transparency

Brussels, 07 June 2016

European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual & Reproductive Rights calls on European Commission to support a temporary TRIPS Waiver ahead of next WTO TRIPS Council Meeting

Dear Ms Věra Jourová, Vice President of the European Commission for Values and Transparency

European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual & Reproductive Rights (EPF) is calling on the European Commission to support a TRIPS waiver on COVID-19 vaccines and medicines at the next meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) TRIPS Council meeting.

A temporary suspension of intellectual property rights to allow increased global production of vaccines has been proposed by over 60 countries at the WTO with the support of the World Health Organisation (WHO). This intellectual property includes patents and technological information in respect of manufacturing. The WHO COVID Technology Access Pool offers several practical mechanisms to facilitate the sharing of such information. While the United States initially opposed a TRIPS waiver, they have recognised that “the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic call for extraordinary measures.” The European Commission’s opposition remains one of the main obstacles to a TRIPS waiver. In the context of a major global inequity in access to vaccines and medicines and a growing global death toll, we as members of the European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual & Reproductive Rights are calling on the European Commission to support a temporary TRIPS waiver.

EPF has consistently worked for equitable access to healthcare across the globe including reproductive and maternal healthcare. In that context, we are particularly concerned given the evidence of the impact of COVID-19 on pregnancy and the vulnerability of pregnant individuals in the Global South. Inadequate access to vaccination is also placing considerable strain on all other supports, including reproductive and sexual health supports, provided by frontline health services across the Global South.

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Moreover, when a huge portion of the world’s population remains vulnerable to COVID-19 this allows the virus to develop new variants which may, in turn, become vaccine-resistant.\footnote{SARS-CoV-2 Variants, https://www.who.int/csr/don/31-december-2020-sars-cov2-variants/en/, 31-05-2021} We believe the only way to truly tackle this global pandemic is through speedy and collective action.

For these reasons, we are as Members of Parliaments from across political parties calling on the European Commission to support a temporary TRIPS waiver at the next meeting of the WTO. We note also the recent motion passed by the European Parliament in support of a TRIPS waiver \footnote{Accelerating progress and tackling inequalities towards ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0250_EN.docx, 26-05-2021}.

Yours sincerely,
European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual & Reproductive Rights

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Hon. Saara Hyrkkö, MP, Finland
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