

Statement by coalition of national business associations on European Commission vaccine export regime

February 15, 2021

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, it remains critical for governments to act in a coordinated manner to enable the safest and quickest re-opening possible of our economies and to better protect the health of people around the world. Many wealthier countries will be able to manage their own vaccine supply, and the disruptions caused by measures imposed by the EU could hit the poorest countries disproportionately. This is a global pandemic and the vaccine needs to be universally available if we are to hope to have any chances of returning to normal.

As business associations from the European Union's largest trading partners, we are deeply concerned with the European Commission's new export authorization requirements for COVID-19 vaccines and related inputs before they can be shipped. We urge the European Commission to re-consider its approach and make the issuance of such authorizations automatic.

This recently announced export measure contradicts the spirit of previous commitments the European Union has made in the context of the [September 2020 G20 Trade and Investment Ministerial](#) meeting and the [Ottawa Group Trade and Health Initiative](#). Additionally, the timing for draft decisions of two business days followed by a further potential two day extension, and a further day for confirmation or rejection by the European Commission, risks disrupting the complex logistics behind the distribution of vaccines, including ultra-cold storage requirements in some cases.

We are also concerned about the precedent this measure sets and the risk of encouraging other countries to implement similar actions that would further disrupt the manufacturing and flow of vaccines and other essential goods to fight the pandemic, contrary to the advice of the World Trade Organization and World Health Organization. During the first wave of the pandemic, we saw the harmful proliferation of measures that restricted trade in medical equipment.

A collective effort is vital to keep supply chains moving as vaccine manufacturing capacity increases. A change by the European Commission to issue automatic authorizations would restore certainty for vaccine manufacturers, logistics providers, citizens, and companies globally.

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