



Joint Statement: SECTION27 and TAC welcome strong CERD statement on COVID vaccine inequity

Johannesburg, 5 May 2022 - The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) and SECTION27 welcome the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination's (CERD) 'Statement on the lack of equitable and non-discriminatory access to COVID-19 vaccines' at its 106th session on 25 April 2022. The Committee acknowledged the bias against vulnerable and marginalised communities based on identity markers such as race (people of mainly African and Asian descent) and ethnic identity in both the Global South and North. These groups are some of the most affected by structural inequality, which has resulted in some of their socio-economic rights being infringed.

Their statement also called on States to ensure effective and non-discriminatory access to COVID-19 diagnostics, vaccines and therapeutics, taking into account the situation and needs of marginalised groups subjected to discrimination. Importantly, it called on Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America to support the [TRIPS Waiver Proposal](#). The TRIPS Waiver Proposal calls for a broader temporary waiver on intellectual property rights pertaining to COVID-19 diagnostics, vaccines and treatments. Over 100 countries have supported the [waiver proposal](#) that was submitted by South Africa and India.

As an illustration of this discrimination, it is important to note that according to the UN's [Global Dashboard for Vaccine Equity](#), as of 4 May 2022, only 17,4% or one in six people in low income countries have had at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccination in comparison to 72,08% or almost three in four people in high income countries.

We call on duty bearers - both private and public - to assist in rectifying this speedily through supporting the TRIPS waiver and making quality COVID-19 diagnostics, vaccines and treatments available at an affordable price, as this inimically effects marginalised people's lives, livelihoods and health.

Sasha Stevenson, SECTION27's Head of Health Rights Programme said "In making a strong statement on vaccine inequity as an extension of racial inequality, CERD has endorsed the calls of activists across the world and the statements of other UN special procedures mandate holders."

CERD's statement came about following a [petition](#) from activist organisations from around the world, namely the African Alliance, the Centre for Economic and Social Rights, Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales, Equal Health, the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights, Minority Rights Group, Oxfam, Amnesty International, Treatment Action Campaign and Women's Legal Centre (with the support and coordination of the Global Network of Movement Lawyers, SECTION27 and ESCR-Net).

Anele Yawa, the TAC General Secretary said "while we are happy that this action has been taken by CERD, and hope that they will continue supporting the fight against vaccine apartheid, it is imperative that we follow this with strong advocacy in order to change the status quo."

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