

***Open Letter to the President of the United States  
on the Need for U.S. Leadership in Global Vaccinations***

May 11, 2021

The President  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We stand as a nation in a moment of great consequence. While the United States seems to be gaining control of the pandemic, our allies in Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Africa face increasingly deadly outbreaks that threaten to overwhelm their healthcare systems. Aid and assistance to people in need has been a hallmark of U.S. foreign policy for well over a century. The world has come to rely upon U.S. leadership at times of great strife. The ability of our government, working in tandem with the private sector, to deliver innovative solutions that save lives and restore peace and stability is the very foundation of U.S. soft power. Today we have a generational opportunity to mobilize vaccine efforts around the world. Our friends and allies will not forget easily if we sit on surplus stockpiles of the most proven vaccines as their citizens suffer and die.

Your Administration has committed \$4 billion to Covax, the multilateral effort headed by the WHO to get vaccines into the arms of people in disadvantaged nations. You have also announced your intention to donate 60 million doses of our supply of Astra Zeneca vaccine for global deployment. While these actions are a laudable and necessary start, by themselves they are far too small in scale to turn the tide of the global pandemic. We must do more. This is not only a matter of geopolitics. With the virus teeming unchecked in places like India, the Philippines, and elsewhere, it becomes increasingly possible for dangerous variants to evolve that are resistant to the existing vaccines. Such variants will know no borders.

The U.S. must act now to leverage rapidly increasing U.S. domestic vaccine production, export ever-larger volumes of our surplus supplies, and go to work on the massive technical and logistical challenges to vaccine development on a global scale. U.S. support for the Intellectual Property waiver being promoted by the WTO would make little difference and could do harm. It does not consider the proper materials, equipment, training, and infrastructure necessary to manufacture the vaccine safely and successfully (in addition to being a potential disincentive for future innovation).

We urge you, Mr. President, to demonstrate decisive U.S. leadership now as a critical matter of U.S. foreign policy, humanitarian relief, and global human health.

Sincerely,

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