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Statement from Ambassador Katherine Tai on an Intellectual Property Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

June 17, 2022

GENEVA – United States Trade Representative Katherine Tai today released the following statement after the World Trade Organization (WTO) Members reached an outcome on an intellectual property response to the COVID-19 pandemic during the 12th Ministerial Conference.

“Last May when I announced the Biden Administration’s support for a waiver of intellectual property protections for vaccines as part our comprehensive effort to end the pandemic, many doubted that the WTO could rise to the occasion and reach an outcome. But that’s exactly what we have done.

“The text-based negotiations with other WTO Members that we called for have produced accommodations to the intellectual property rules for COVID-19 vaccines that can facilitate a global health recovery. Through difficult and protracted discussions, Members were able to bridge differences and achieve a concrete and meaningful outcome to get more safe and effective vaccines to those who need it most.

“This agreement shows that we can work together to make the WTO more relevant to the needs of regular people. During a global pandemic, under difficult circumstances, the WTO moved quickly to address a major global challenge and respond to the strong desire of our African partners to produce a meaningful outcome. Consultations with our stakeholders in the private sector and civil society, with Members of Congress and their staffs, and colleagues across the Administration, were critical in informing USTR’s understanding of the nuances in the global market, production challenges, and the public health needs of the world’s people.

“Going forward, the Biden Administration will continue work with WTO Members, the private sector, and other partners to expand vaccine manufacturing and distribution to facilitate the global health recovery needed for a robust global economic recovery.”

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