



# statement

## IFPMA statement on “Intellectual Property and COVID-19”

The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound health, social and economic impact around the world. The biopharmaceutical industry has made addressing the pandemic its top priority, devoting its resources, expertise, know-how, and intellectual assets to developing potential treatments, diagnostics and vaccines at unprecedented pace, while committing to and engaging in unprecedented levels of international collaboration and coordination through initiatives such as ACT-A, ACTIV and CEPI to ensure equitable access to products being developed.

The intellectual property (IP) system has enabled collaboration between biopharmaceutical innovators and governments, universities and other research partners to speed up progress on our most pressing unmet medical needs, including hundreds of potential COVID-19 treatments, diagnostics and vaccines for patients around the world. It has also been the driving force behind the many innovations that will help us overcome the pandemic, giving rise to nearly all of the molecules, platforms, and other technologies that have enabled industry to target COVID-19 at an advanced stage, and helping to ensure the resources and conditions needed to see the development of promising treatments through to approval. IP will also continue to play a crucial role long after this pandemic is over, to ensure that the world is prepared with innovative solutions for future global health crisis, in addition to other pressing healthcare needs.

Despite the critical role that IP has successfully played in enabling innovation and collaboration, some stakeholders have proposed to weaken national and international IP frameworks during the COVID-19 pandemic. While we share the objective of equitable access to medicines, we disagree with the premise that IP rights are potential barriers to R&D, public-private collaborations or access to COVID-19 products. Our experience shows the opposite. Indeed, because IP is so critical to each of the goals of innovation, collaboration and access, such proposals would undermine all of them, and therefore would fail to achieve what is so urgently needed.

One-size-fits all proposals advocating for diluting or suspending IP rights during this pandemic disregard the specific circumstances of each situation, each product and each country – all facing very different challenges regarding the manufacture and distribution of COVID-19 treatments and vaccines. The international IP system already has rules and practices to permit customized solutions to real-world problems that may arise.

Long before the SARS CoV-2 pandemic, pharmaceutical companies have engaged in many voluntary licensing initiatives as part of their business model, with IP providing them the necessary confidence to engage in such transactions. For instance, several IFPMA member companies have established long-term partnerships with the Medicines Patent Pool (MPP) to license their HIV, tuberculosis, and hepatitis C products to well over a hundred countries. The biopharmaceutical industry’s record of engaging with multiple stakeholders through various innovative access initiatives and research collaborations showcases that a strong IP incentive system is not incompatible with a rapid and robust response to a health crisis, as demonstrated in our actions to address COVID-19.

Biopharmaceutical companies remain committed to working day and night in collaboration with all stakeholders to find solutions to tackle this pandemic.