

In these unprecedented times, global biotechnology companies, both large and small, are coming together to work on vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics to eradicate COVID-19. Global collaborations and the decades-long investments we have made in new technology, research and treatments have led to a multitude of efforts to develop vaccines and treatments for COVID-19.

The International Council of Biotechnology Associations (ICBA) is a coalition of 30 non-profit, national biotechnology trade associations that advocates for public policies that support the innovative biotechnology industries. Representing biotechnology innovators globally, we believe that combatting this pandemic calls for a global, coordinated, transparent, robust, large-scale and science-based response.

Our aim is to:

- Support small to large biotechnology companies that are researching and developing new vaccines, diagnostics and treatments for use in the fight against COVID-19; and
- Ensure the efficient and safe supply of medicines to the patients that need them.

### **Our Commitments**

The global biotechnology sector is committed to working collaboratively across the research and healthcare communities, leading with science and leveraging our resources to tackle this outbreak.

Globally biotechnology companies are::

- Rapidly screening global libraries of medicines to identify potential treatments and have numerous clinical trials underway to test new and existing therapies;
- Dedicating our top scientists and using our investments in new technologies to speed the development of safe and effective vaccines;
- Sharing the learnings from clinical trials in real time with governments and other companies to advance the development of additional therapies;
- Expanding our unique manufacturing capabilities and sharing available capacity to ramp up production once a successful medicine or vaccine is developed;
- Collaborating with government agencies, hospitals, doctors and others to donate supplies and medicines to help those affected around the world;
- Working with governments and other payers to ensure that when new treatments and vaccines are approved, they will be available and affordable for patients;

- Coordinating with the governments and diagnostic partners to increase COVID-19 testing capability and capacity;
- Protecting the integrity of the pharmaceutical supply chain and keeping our plants open to maintain a steady supply of medicines for patients; and
- Remaining steadfast in our commitment to research and development of new medicines to prevent, treat and cure disease in all its forms, not just COVID-19.

### **Our Recommendations**

The biopharmaceutical industry is focused first and foremost on beating COVID-19 with diagnostics, treatments and vaccines that will be made affordable and accessible to patients in need. In considering countermeasures to the current pandemic, we urge governments to avoid any measures that will inhibit the R&D projects and disrupt global trade, impeding the ability of the global biotechnology supply chain to function. As we collaborate globally to fight this pandemic, it is critical that governments focus on setting science-based policies that encourage continued R&D.

#### **Global Supply Chains**

In times of crisis, the need to maintain open trade and robust and efficient supply chains is particularly critical to ensure uninhibited access to critical goods, such as life-saving treatments and agricultural and other food products. We commend global coordination efforts to minimize disruptions to trade and global supply chains, such as those undertaken by the G20, G7, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), World Trade Organization (WTO), World Health Organization (WHO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and others.

To avoid disruptions to global supply chains, we urge governments to:

- Facilitate trade by eliminating tariffs on medicines and medical and protective equipment in a transparent and comprehensive way;
- Refrain from imposing export and import restrictions or other barriers (e.g. stockpiling requirements for medical products, localization and local content requirements, and restrictions on food exports) that will disrupt already stretched global supply chains; and
- Continue to engage with trading partners to minimize disruptions to cross-border trade, including increasing transparency by sharing information on new trade and trade-related measures introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Intellectual Property**

Intellectual Property (IP) protections are vital to enable biomedical innovation – and for future pandemic preparedness. We encourage agencies to recognize that coercive measures to suspend or eliminate IP protections will not accelerate the development of new treatments or vaccines for COVID-19. In fact, strong IP protections are the very reason that so many entities around the world were poised to promptly shift their R&D efforts to fight this crisis. IP encourages the development of expertise, capacity, and infrastructure, as well as investment in risky and extraordinarily expensive research and development. Dozens of companies have already stepped up and are taking risks and redeploying resources to meet the urgent need.

- Robust IP protections have mobilized and sustained large amounts of private investment that has funded research, infrastructure, and innovations which biotechnology companies are now leveraging to accelerate COVID-19 research.
- IP protections also have supported existing capacities for manufacturing scale-up as well as robust distribution and supply chains, which will be essential to get treatments and vaccines to the world when approved.
- Collaboration between private and public actors is a hallmark of the ongoing COVID-19 response. The interests of the public and private research sectors in the current crisis are aligned, not opposed as some have claimed.
- Lawful, proportionate, and temporary exercises of government emergency powers are already available to respond to genuine emergencies that cannot be addressed collaboratively between a government and an IP rightsholder. Government emergency powers, when used rationally and in good faith, have seldom been necessary. Past experience reinforces that the COVID-19 crisis can be overcome without resort to such measures, as governments and manufacturers will find it easier to quickly deploy new treatments in a collaborative rather than coercive manner.
- Discussing the blanket use of compulsory licenses or other similar provisions before treatments or patents on COVID treatments even exist is premature and will not accelerate R&D efforts as some have claimed. Rather, such discussions are counterproductive to ongoing as well as future private R&D efforts, as well as collaborations between public and private entities.
- Suspending IP protections at this time may disincentivize the sharing of information and collaboration that is critical to the rapid development of diagnostics, treatments, and vaccines.

- Many of the technologies that will be used to discover, develop and manufacture diagnostics, treatments, and vaccines have been developed at great expense of time and money and can be used to address diseases beyond COVID-19. Such technologies should be protected and shared.
- Many innovations arising from COVID-19 research will be instrumental in the development of new diagnostics, manufacturing processes, and treatments for other diseases and future pandemics. IP protection on today's innovations ensures commitment to and availability of tomorrow's innovations.

### **Championing the Discovery of COVID-19 Vaccines and Treatments**

As the global biotechnology industry works to find treatments and vaccines for COVID-19, ICBA member associations continue to work with national governments to avoid countermeasures that might inhibit these critical R&D efforts.

#### **Free Flow of Scientific Data**

The global scientific community requires the free flow of scientific information related to COVID-19 in order to develop treatments, vaccines, and diagnostics. Conditions placed on the sharing of genetic sequence data or biological samples, or limitations regarding the transfer of data and information across borders can significantly delay or even deny the ability of the scientific community to respond. In the spirit of reinforcing greater international cooperation, we encourage efforts to ensure scientific data relevant to COVID-19 is shared in a timely and efficient manner with researchers globally.

#### **Regulatory**

As companies make strides towards potential vaccines and treatments, regulatory agencies play a critical role in accelerating patient access. We urge national governments to share the learnings from clinical trials and other relevant information in real time with governments, other companies and other relevant entities to advance the development of additional therapies and vaccines.

The global biotechnology industry is working in close collaboration with government agencies and other stakeholders in the quest to beat coronavirus. Everyone has a unique role to play and we are confident that together we can succeed.

For more information, visit [internationalbiotech.org](http://internationalbiotech.org).