

Statement on Copyright and Proposal of a Waiver from Certain Provisions of the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement for the Prevention, Containment and Treatment of COVID-19 (IP/C/W/669)

March 22, 2021

We support the work and interests of millions of researchers, educators, libraries, archives and museums around the world who are contributing to the prevention, containment and treatment of the COVID-19 pandemic through promotion of access to knowledge.

We applaud the efforts of World Trade Organization (WTO) Members to address copyright barriers to an equitable response to COVID-19.

Access to copyrighted works, in addition to patents and know-how, is needed to prevent and contain COVID-19 and to develop treatments.

COVID-19 has aggravated deep inequalities in access to knowledge. In some countries with flexible copyright systems, residents are able to access and use essential materials in remote educational, learning and research activities, virtually access and use the collections of libraries and other institutions, and contribute to research on treatments using advanced processes such as text and data mining.

But these activities are not taking place everywhere because they are not lawful everywhere.

In too many countries, copyright laws do not enable remote digital uses of works for essential activities. Educational uses are too often limited to activities “within” educational institutions or in “face to face” teaching. Uses of the collections of libraries and other public repositories are often limited to “the premises” of such institutions.

In too many countries, researchers lack the rights they need to use the most advanced research methodologies, such as text and data mining, to help find and develop treatments to COVID-19. Indeed, the virus itself was discovered by a text and data mining research project that would not be lawful in many countries.

Inequity in the possibilities to use products of knowledge and culture violates the right to health, to receive and impart information, to education, to participate in cultural life, and to benefit from scientific progress.

We strongly support international solidarity in addressing the copyright barriers to the prevention, containment and treatment of COVID-19. It is critical that research and other resources are made available immediately everywhere in the world to use and build upon. Removing legal barriers to knowledge is a key complement to efforts to remove patent and other barriers needed for the massive, urgent scale-up of vaccine production.

We urge all WTO Members to endorse the TRIPS waiver proposal, including provisions on copyright. Such a move will reflect the emergency that COVID-19 presents. It will give vital reassurance to governments that they may issue urgent edicts, adopt emergency interpretations of their laws, and amend and otherwise overcome copyright hurdles to access to knowledge needed to address the pandemic.

Adopting the TRIPS waiver is not enough. We call on the WTO and other agencies in charge of promoting the public interest in access to and production of knowledge to act urgently to further guide

countries in addressing copyright barriers to access to knowledge that have been illuminated and magnified by COVID-19. Specifically, we call for urgent action to clarify that all copyright and related rights treaties, including the copyright provisions of the TRIPS Agreement:

- Can and should be interpreted and implemented to respect the primacy of human rights obligations during the pandemic and other emergencies, including the rights to seek, receive and impart information, to education, and to freely participate in cultural life and share in scientific advancement and its benefits, while protecting the moral and material interests of authors;
- Permit governments to protect and promote vital public interests during a health or other emergency;
- Permit governments to carry forward and appropriately extend into the digital environment limitations and exceptions that are appropriate in the digital network environment, particularly during a health or other emergency.

Signatories

Organizations

1. Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf)
2. African Library & Information Associations & Institutions (AfLIA)
3. All India Drug Action Network
4. All India Peoples Science Network (AIPSN), India
5. ANSOL - Associação Nacional para o Software Livre, Portugal
6. Asociación de Bibliotecólogos del Uruguay
7. Association of Research Libraries, United States
8. Association for Proper Internet Governance, Switzerland
9. Australian Digital Alliance
10. Blind SA, South Africa
11. Brazilian Institute of Information in Science and Technology
12. CCAOI, India
13. Centrum Cyfrowe, Poland
14. Center for Health, Human Rights and Development (CEHURD), Uganda
15. Center for Intellectual Property and Information Technology Law, Kenya
16. Centre for Internet and Society, India
17. Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Liberties)
18. Committee of Higher Education Libraries of South Africa (CHELSA), South Africa
19. COMMUNIA
20. Consortium of Uganda University Libraries (CUUL)
21. Corporacion Innovarte, Chile
22. Creative Commons
23. Creative Commons Brasil
24. Creative Commons Italy
25. Creative Commons México
26. Creative Commons Portugal
27. Creative Commons South Africa
28. Creative Commons Uganda
29. Creative Commons Uruguay
30. Creative Commons Venezuela
31. CulturalAction, Korea
32. D3 - Defesa dos Direitos Digitais, Portugal

33. Datysoc, Uruguay
34. DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era)
35. Derechos Digitales, Latin America
36. DiGiCULT/UFERSA - DigiCult - Studies and Research Group on Digital Law and Cultural Rights of the Federal Rural University of the Semi-arid Region, Brazil
37. Documentary Filmmakers' Association of South Africa
38. Educational International
39. EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries)
40. epicenter.works - for digital rights, Austria
41. Fight for the Future, United States
42. Fundación IFARMA, Colombia
43. Fundación Karisma, Colombia
44. Fundación Vía Libre, Argentina
45. Free Knowledge Advocacy Group EU (Wikimedia)
46. Global Expert Network on Copyright User Rights
47. Hiperderecho, Perú
48. Initiative for Health & Equity in Society, India
49. Instituto Nacional de Ciência e Tecnologia (INCT) Proprietas, Brazil
50. Intellectual Property Institute (IPI), Slovenia
51. International Treatment Preparedness Coalition (ITPC)
52. InternetLab, Brazil
53. International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)
54. Intervozes - Coletivo Brasil de Comunicação Social, Brazil
55. IP Unit (University of Cape Town), South Africa
56. iRights e.V., Germany
57. ISUR - Centro de Internet y Sociedad de la Universidad del Rosario, Colombia
58. IT for Change, India
59. Indonesia for Global Justice (IGJ)
60. Kenya Libraries and Information Consortium
61. Knowledge Commune, Korea
62. Knowledge Ecology International
63. Lesotho Library Consortium (LELICO)
64. LIASA, South Africa
65. Library Copyright Alliance, United States
66. Lithuanian Research Library Consortium
67. Mongolian Libraries Consortium
68. Núcleo de Pesquisa em Propriedade Intelectual - NUPPI/UFSC, Brasil
69. NUREP - Núcleo de Pesquisa em Direitos Fundamentais, Relações Privadas e Políticas Públicas/Research Group on Fundamental Rights, Private Relations and Public Policy (UFRRJ), Brazil
70. Observatorio del Tratado de Marrakech en América Latina
71. Open Access India
72. Open Content, Czech Republic
73. Open Future Foundation, Netherlands
74. Open Knowledge Brazil
75. Pan African Treatment Access Movement
76. Program on Information Justice and Intellectual Property, American University, USA
77. Public Citizen, United States
78. Public Knowledge, United States
79. R3D: Red en defensa de los derechos digitales, Mexico
80. ReCreate South Africa

81. Red de Educación Popular entre Mujeres - REPEM, Latino América y el Caribe
82. Research Center for Intellectual Property, Internet and Innovation (GNet-UFMG), Brazil
83. Réseau québécois sur l'intégration continentale, Canada
84. Right 2 Know Campaign, South Africa
85. Salud y Farmacos, USA
86. SECTION27, South Africa
87. Society for Technology Studies, Ethiopia
88. Software Preservation Network
89. Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information and Negotiations Institute (SEATINI), Uganda
90. SPARC
91. SPARC Africa
92. SPARC Europe
93. The Democracy Collaborative
94. Third World Network
95. Treatment Action Group, USA
96. Universities Allied for Essential Medicines
97. Vrijdschrift Foundation, Netherlands
98. Wikimedia Deutschland
99. Wikimédia France
100. Wikimedia Italia
101. Wikimedia ZA, South Africa
102. Wiki Movimento Brasil
103. Yolse, Santé Publique et Innovation
104. Zimbabwe University Libraries Consortium (ZULC)

Individuals

1. Susan Aaronson, Digital Trade and Data Governance Hub, GWU
2. Shriyuta Abhishek, Infosys Foundation, India
3. Nana Abuelsoud
4. Gerly Carolina Ariza Zabala, Univerisdad Autónoma de Bucaramanga
5. Muhammad Zaheer Abbas, Queensland University of Technology
6. Adebambo Adewopo, Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies
7. Akshat Agrawal, IPRMENT LAW
8. Carolina Aguerre, CETYS/GCR21 UDE
9. Bianca Amaro
10. Patricia Aufderheide, American University
11. Fernando Baggio
12. Sara Bannerman, McMaster University
13. Pedro Marcos Barbosa, PUC-Rio
14. Erica Basu, American University
15. Jorge Bermudez, Fiocruz, Brazil
16. EDWIN BERNAL RAMIREZ
17. Juan Biermann, López Júbilo Editorial
18. Bibiana Biscaia, Virtuoso UFPR
19. Daniele Bourcier, CNRS
20. Walter Britto Gaspar, Centre for Technology and Society, FGV Law School
21. Beatriz Busaniche, Fundación Vía Libre, Universidad de Buenos Aires
22. Matías Butelman, Creative Commons Argentina
23. Josir Cardoso Gomes, INSTITUTO RDX DE ENSINO

24. Fernando Carpani, UDELAR - Uruguay
25. Pascale Chapdelaine, Faculty of Law, University of Windsor
26. Margaret Chon, Seattle University School of Law
27. Lyl Mercedes Ciganda Brasca, Universidad de la República, Uruguay
28. Rodrigo Corredor, Universidad Externado de Colombia
29. Tesh Dagne, Thompson Rivers University Faculty of Law
30. Angela Daly, University of Strathclyde Law School, Scotland
31. Gabriel Danis, Centrale des syndicats du Québec (CSQ)
32. Francisco de Izaguirre, Universidad de la República, Uruguay
33. Estelle Derclaye, University of Nottingham
34. Francisco de Izaguirre, Universidad de la República, Uruguay
35. Biswajit Dhar, Jawaharlal Nehru University
36. Gabriela Diessler, Instituto de Biología y Medicina Experimental
37. Jean Dryden, International Council on Archives
38. Graham Dutfield, University of Leeds
39. Nilce Ekandzi, University of Strasbourg
40. Niva Elkin-Koren, Tel Aviv University
41. Wian Erlank, North-West University
42. Octavio Espinosa, Biopolis Consultants
43. Germán Ferrari, UDELAR
44. Georg Fischer
45. Smitha Francis, Institute for Studies in Industrial Development (ISID)
46. Gastón García González, Universidad de la República
47. Christophe Geiger, University of Strasbourg
48. Michael Geist, University of Ottawa
49. Franco Giandana, Fundación Vía Libre
50. Teresa Gil, University Koblenz-Landau
51. Victor Gonzalez-Barbone, Universidad de la Republica, Uruguay
52. Volker Grassmuck, Hans Bredow Institut Hamburg
53. Robin Gross, IP Justice
54. Henning Grosse Ruse-Khan, University of Cambridge
55. Andres Guadamuz, University of Sussex, UK
56. Paulo Guanaes, Fundação Oswaldo Cruz
57. Gustavo Guedes Furtado, Fiocruz / Instituto de Comunicação e Informação Científica e Tecnológica em Saúde
58. Lucie Guibault, Dalhousie University
59. Sridhar Gutam, ICAR Indian Institute of Horticultural Research
60. Robert Heverly, Albany Law School
61. Yuanqiong Hu, Law, Environment and Development Centre, SOAS, London
62. Vitor Ido, University of São Paulo (USP)
63. Peter Jaszi, American University Washington College of Law
64. Nicolas Jondet, Edinburgh Law School
65. Vanessa Jorge, Fundação Oswaldo Cruz
66. Divij Joshi, Independent Economist, India
67. Dick Kawooya, University of South Carolina
68. Katarzyna Klafkowska-Waśniowska, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland
69. Leti Kleyn Future Africa, University of Pretoria
70. Ansgar Koene, University of Nottingham
71. Shraddha Kulhari, Max Planck Institute for Innovation and Competition
72. Rohini Lakshané, The Bachchao Project
73. Alice Lana, UFPR

74. Pedro Lana, GEDAI/UFPR, CC Br, Youth SIG (ISOC)
75. Jyh-An Lee, The Chinese University of Hong Kong Faculty of Law
76. Yahong Li, University of Hong Kong
77. Joel Lexchin, University Health Network
78. Tiago Lubiana, University of São Paulo, Brazil
79. Cassio Luiselli, UNAM, MEXICO
80. Carlos Luna, Facultad de Ingeniería de la Universidad de la República, Uruguay
81. Lisa Macklem, King's University College/University of Western Ontario
82. Michael Madison, University of Pittsburgh
83. Dan Maitland
84. N MANI, Erode Arts and Science College Erode Tamil Nadu India
85. Annette Markham, RMIT University
86. Sergio Martinez, T. Universidad de la República, Uruguay
87. Pablo Massaferró, Universidad de la República
88. Lionel Maurel, InSHS
89. Mark McCutcheon, Athabasca University
90. Spencer McGinty
91. Dale McKinley, International Labour, Research & Information Group
92. Heloisa Medeiros, Gedai UFPR, Brazil
93. Gayatri Menon, Azim Premji University
94. Linda Meyer, Universities South Africa
95. Péter Mezei, University of Szeged
96. John Mitchell, Interaction Law
97. Pablo Monzón, Udelar
98. Kali Murray, Marquette University Law School
99. Mundur V.N. Murthy, The Institute of Mathematical Sciences
100. Rodrigo Murtinho, Ict/Fiocruz
101. Caroline Ncube, University of Cape Town
102. Unathi Ndiki, Ikhwelo Healers Association
103. Denise Nicholson, Scholarly Horizons
104. Paul Ogendi, University of Nairobi
105. Kunle Ola, Australian Catholic University
106. Julia Jan Osei-Tutu, FIU Law
107. Juan Miguel Palma Peña, UNAM
108. Andrés Pavas, Universidad Nacional de Colombia
109. Aaron Perzanowski, Case Western Reserve University School of Law
110. Alexandre Pessler, GEDAI / BRAZIL
111. Pranesh Prakash, Co-Founder, CIS, India
112. Alvaro Quintero-Posada, Instituto Nacional de Cancerología ESE
113. Srividhya Ragavan, Texas A&M School of Law
114. Fifi A Rahman, Health Poverty Action
115. Jayashree Ramadas, Former Director, Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education
116. Sujatha Ramdorai, Canada Research Chair at University of British Columbia
117. Gregory Randall, Universidad de la República, Uruguay
118. Jorge Rasner, Universidad de la República
119. Sofía Rasnik, Instituto Formación Docente de Paysandú
120. Padmini Ray, Murray Design Beku
121. Julia Reda, former member of the European Parliament
122. Jess Reia, McGill University
123. Jerome Reichman, Duke Law School
124. Andrew Rens, Research ICT Africa

125. Graham Reynolds, Allard School of Law, University of British Columbia
126. Pablo Francisco Rojas Castellanos, Universidad Nacional de Colombia
127. Carolina Rossini, Portulans Institute
128. Lukas Ruthes Gonçalves, GEDAI/UFPR
129. Tapas Sadasivan Nair, WHO
130. Sanya Samtani, Law Faculty, University of Oxford
131. Krishnaswamy Sankaran, Ex Madurai Kamaraj University
132. Liz Beatriz Sass, Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina
133. Arul George Scaria, National Law University, Delhi
134. Dr Mira Shiva, Public Health Physician, India
135. Obed Sindy, ISOC Haiti
136. Aram Sinnreich, American University
137. Irene Soria, Creative Commons México
138. Erik Stallman, UC Berkeley School of Law
139. Nina Sun, Drexel University, Dornsife School of Public Health
140. Madhavi Sunder, Georgetown University Law Center
141. Sunita Tripathy, Information Society, European University Institute
142. Samuel Trosow, University of Western Ontario
143. Maria Victoria, Whittingham ESAP
144. Rodrigo Vieira, Costa Federal Rural University of the Semi-Arid Region (UFERSA)
145. Jingyi Wang, University of Cambridge
146. Darius Whelan, University College Cork
147. Santiago Wiesner, Universidad Externado de Colombia
148. John Willinsky, Stanford University
149. Hong Xue, Beijing Normal University
150. Nicolo Zingales, FGV Law School