

Over 100 countries back Trips waiver on Covid-19 vaccines

President Cyril Ramaphosa says a proposal by South Africa at the World Trade Organisation to waive specific Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (Trips) obligations related to the manufacturing of Covid-19 vaccines is now supported by over 100 countries.



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The President said this when he responded to oral questions in the National Assembly on Thursday.

“We want to manufacture vaccines locally against the pandemic. It is for this reason that South Africa and India proposed the Trips waiver at the World Trade Organisation to enable the manufacturing of Covid-19 vaccines in developing countries.

“The proposal is now supported by more than 100 countries. SA welcomes the statement by the United States that it will support the Trips waiver on intellectual property protection for Covid-19 vaccines,” he said.

This comes after the President, in his capacity at the Chairperson of the African Union (AU), made the call during a webinar on the Africa Covid-19 Vaccine Financing and Development Strategy, in a move that would enable countries in Africa and in other developing countries to access active pharmaceutical ingredients and benefit from technology transfer, including the know-how to manufacture vaccines in Africa at a cheaper cost.

Addressing MPs on Thursday, the President said the decision by the United States to throw its weight behind the proposal is a victory for South Africa.

“It goes to show the influence we have as a country, working together with others, that our voice and messages have weight because they are rational, progressive and are meant to benefit people on our continent,” he said.

Government finalises contracts with vaccine manufacturers

The President said, meanwhile, that government has finalised contracts with several vaccine manufacturers, which will be enough to vaccinate 41.5 million people.

This includes the finalisation of a contract with Johnson & Johnson to supply 31 million doses, another contract with Pfizer for the supply of 20 million vaccine doses, with an additional allocation from Covax of nearly 1.4 million doses.

The first shipment of the Pfizer vaccine was received earlier this week.

“It should be noted that the negotiations with manufacturers were protracted, as government had to ensure that the terms of the contracts were consistent with SA laws and not detrimental to national interests.

“We have now finalised contracts for sufficient doses to vaccinate 41.5 million people. The estimated times for the delivery of the vaccines depends on several factors, many of which are beyond our control.”

He said the contractual delivery schedule, as per the information shared by manufacturers, will see South Africa receiving three million Johnson & Johnson doses in quarter two of 2021, 4.5 million Pfizer doses through government’s contract with Pfizer, and a further 1.4 million Pfizer doses via the Covax facility.

He said in the third quarter, South Africa is scheduled to receive 9.1 million Johnson & Johnson doses and another 8.5 million Pfizer doses, while the remaining 19.1 Johnson & Johnson doses and seven million Pfizer doses are scheduled to arrive in the fourth quarter.

“In total, we are scheduled to receive 31.2m J&J doses and 21.4 Pfizer doses,” the President said.

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