

Open Letter for Breaking Patents to Combat Covid-19

To the President of the Socialist International, George Papandreou,

To the Secretary General, Luis Ayala,

To the other members of the organization,

We live in a serious and decisive moment for the history of mankind. The next generations will inevitably be marked by the result of our attitudes and choices now. The Covid-19 pandemic has shaken the world as it has certainly not been seen since the great wars. There is no way that everything can remain the same after such a tragic and traumatic event.

It is necessary to take a courageous stance in relation to patents and intellectual property rights of health technologies used to fight coronavirus, especially vaccines. The current system was not shaped to deal with pandemics. While the pharmaceutical industry and developed countries profit from sales, middle and low-income countries suffer from dependence and waiting.

The pandemic continues to claim lives, at a much faster pace than that of the bureaucratic process. The suspension of patents would make it possible to manufacture inputs everywhere and reduce the risk of lack of vaccines. Since January, in a video published on my social networks, I have already defended the urgent need for this measure.

In September 2020, the World Trade Organization debated a proposal from India and South Africa, later also supported by China, to temporarily break patents. The proposal received support from about 80 countries, but was

rejected by the United States and the European Union. Unfortunately, Brazil also voted against it. What explains why Brazil is the only one of the low and middle income countries to vote against the suspension of patents?

Brazil is one of the countries hardest hit by the pandemic, thanks to the irresponsibility of the Federal Government and the negativism of the President of the Republic, Jair Bolsonaro. We have already lost more than 300,000 lives, while the President and his supporters continue to criticize WHO's health measures and spread fake news. The government has been in its fourth Minister of Health since the beginning of the pandemic, collecting accusations of inefficiency and omission, including in the process of purchasing vaccines.

In this context, the dependence on the purchase of inputs becomes another factor that hinders the vaccination process of the Brazilian population. The delay in mass vaccination, combined with the non-fulfillment of social isolation, means the circulation of the virus for a longer time, increasing the chance of the emergence of new variants. Each variant is a new threat not only for Brazil, but for the whole world.

Given the omission of the Federal Government of Brazil, I come, on behalf of my country, to ask for support from members of the Socialist International for a union for the breach of vaccine patents. Profit cannot be above the preservation of life. It is necessary to think about the future and the next generations. History will charge us.

Carlos Lupi
President of the Democratic Labor Party of Brazil
Vice-President of Socialist International