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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by The Institute for Protection of Women's Rights (IPWR), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[6 February 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



The right to fair access to COVID-19 vaccines

The outbreak of COVID-19 is a global crisis that is unprecedented in the last hundred years. In November 2019, when the name COVID-19 was first heard, perhaps no one imagined what a human catastrophe would be befalling societies despite passing of more than two years later. Under such circumstances, the effectiveness of human rights in preserving human lives and promoting the right to health has been severely tested. The rampant spread of the virus not only threatened human lives, rather, discovering and ensuring faster access to the thousand-face vaccine and concerns about the fair distribution of the vaccine across countries turned into the biggest human rights challenge in recent years. During this crisis, hundreds of companies and dozens of countries around the world, generally rich and developed countries, have started projects to discover and produce the COVID-19 vaccine, and the news of the vaccine production reaches the world public every day. From the beginning of 2021, in an effort to combat the Corona epidemic, developed countries gave priority of the use of COVID-19 vaccines to their own citizens, and some less developed countries, both in Asia and in Africa and South America, lagged behind in combating the epidemic. In the very beginning, rich and sparsely populated countries prevented 85 percent of the world's population living in developing countries from accessing the vaccine by pre-purchasing large quantities of the vaccine. Consequently, developing and underdeveloped countries are currently grappling with the rapid growth of COVID-19 cases, and COVID-19 disease, with its new variants, is still taking victims. Although the program called KOVAX Facility (a facility to facilitate the distribution of COVID-19 vaccine) continues to operate, officials have repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with the reduction in aid to rich countries and delays in the delivery of promised shipments.

In December 2021, UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, warned of the consequences of vaccination failure in poor countries, saying "different variants of COVID-19 disease threaten the life and prospects of Africa's economic recovery." He cited low vaccination rates and unequal access to vaccines as the main reason for the growth of new variants of the COVID-19 virus, and once again urged vaccine-producing countries to think about others. It should be noted that Iranian scientists who have a century of experience in producing vaccines in Iran (Islamic Republic of), developed their first locally developed COVID-19 vaccine known as " COVIran Barekat " vaccine following conducting research process and preparing raw materials under the ominous shadow of the United States of America unilateral cruel sanctions which was imposed even in the field of the necessary health and medical materials. Two weeks after the release of the news on the Iranian vaccine, the United States of America, through its Department of Treasury, sanctioned the Barakat science-based Pharmaceutical Company and all its subsidiaries to maintain a monopoly on the production of COVID-19 vaccine.

With due regard to the need for vaccination for the world's billions of people, the right to a vaccine is a fundamental human right that is protected and guaranteed in the light of all various human rights. This right, regardless of race, religion, political opinion or economic or social status, was first recognized as one of the most fundamental human rights in the Constitution of the World Health Organization (Introduction and Article 1). Then, it has since been recognized and adopted in a number of international and regional instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 25, paragraph 1), the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Article 12), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Article 5), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Article 5), the European Social Charter (Article 11), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Article 16), etc. The Institute for the Protection of Women's Rights (IPWR), while expressing concern that more than two years have passed since the outbreak of COVID-19, the monopoly of vaccine production has become the biggest obstacle for developing countries to combat the virus, declares that in order to ensure the right to health, it is necessary for all governments to work toward the widespread production and public access to vaccines in a transparent manner with scientific methods and without restrictions. Any kind of commercial action in order to make a profit and any sanctions that restrict access to the vaccine and lead to the spread of the disease and increase of mortality are considered as violations of international human rights instruments;

and it is on the shoulders of the civil society organizations and human rights institutions to take the necessary prompt and effective action.
