U.S. to hold WTO talks about COVID vaccine distribution

Geneva, May 4 (RHC)-- The top United States trade representative is beginning discussions with the World Trade Organization (WTO) about how to more widely distribute COVID-19 vaccines, as the country faces increasing pressure to help other nations get much-needed jabs.

White House Chief of Staff Ron Klain said that U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai would hold talks with the WTO “on how we can get this vaccine more widely distributed, more widely licensed, more widely shared.”

“We’re going to have more to say about that in the days to come,” Klain said during an interview on the CBS News program Face the Nation.

U.S. President Joe Biden’s administration has faced calls to waive intellectual property rights on much-needed coronavirus vaccines to allow more countries to manufacture doses. The U.S., which has the most coronaviruParis, May 4 (RHC)-- The top United States trade representative is beginning discussions

with the World Trade Organization (WTO) about how to more widely distribute COVID-19 vaccines, as the country faces increasing pressure to help other nations get much-needed jabs.s cases and deaths in the world, has sped up vaccinations of its own population this year, with nearly 56 percent of adults receiving at least one jab to date, according to date from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

But many other countries have not been able to rapidly inoculate their populations amid a global vaccine supply shortage and other challenges – and public health experts say the US should be doing more to promote global vaccine equity.

Last month, international medical charity Doctors Without Borders (Medecins Sans Frontieres, or MSF) urged rich nations to stop blocking patent waivers for COVID-19 vaccines to help lower-income countries secure doses.

The U.S. said last week that it was considering its options to maximise global production and supply of the vaccines at the lowest cost, including backing a proposed waiver of intellectual property rights, but that no decision had been made.

Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said on Sunday that the administration believes pharmaceutical companies "should be supplying at scale and at cost to the entire world so that there is no barrier to everyone getting vaccinated."

Tai's office did not respond to an emailed request for additional details from The Associated Press news agency. Also on Sunday, independent U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders said while the U.S. must ensure every citizen gets vaccinated as quickly as possible, it also has a "moral obligation" to ensure other countries also have access to jabs.

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