

# Poorest WTO members win new patent-rule waiver

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The globe's poorest nations have won an eight-year extension of a waiver on intellectual property rules, but still need to hold talks on the vexed issue of pharmaceutical patents, World Trade Organization officials said Tuesday.

A session of the 159-nation WTO's TRIPS Council—standing for trade-related aspects of [intellectual property rights](#)—ruled that the waiver for 34 countries can now run until July 1, 2021.

"The agreement reached by members makes very clear that we can come together and get things done," WTO chief Pascal Lamy told the council, saying that it provided valuable lessons as member states struggle to revive the so-called Doha Round of [international trade](#) liberalisation talks.

The TRIPS agreement, in force since 1995, requires WTO member states to legislate and enforce minimum standards for the protection of intellectual property in order to boost confidence in global commerce.

But critics said that such rules would be tough to bring in and police in the world's poorest nations, whose failure to fall into line could thereby shut them out of trade sectors and hamper their development.

With the stated goal of the Doha Round, launched at a summit in Qatar in 2001, to harness [global trade](#) to help boost [developing countries](#), WTO members that year agreed on a waiver.

Initially due to run out in 2006, it was extended to 2013.

Separate rules within the TRIPS agreement apply to pharmaceuticals, where a current waiver runs out in 2016, meaning talks will be needed if the countries are to win a new extension.

The pharmaceutical rules within TRIPS are the focus of intense criticism from health campaigners, who charge that they make it tough for countries without a waiver to get access to affordable medicines and are seeking an open-ended escape clause for the poorest nations.

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