**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY MR P. T. CHIGIJI, CHARGE D’AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMABWE AT THE WTO TRIPS COUNCIL ON 19 JANUARY 2021**

Thank you Chairperson and good morning to you all,

As circulated in document IP/C/W/669/Add.7 on 6 January 2021, it gives me great pleasure to announce that the Government of Zimbabwe has elected to join the Delegations of South African, India and other Members, in co-sponsoring the proposed waiver from certain provisions of the TRIPS Agreement for the Prevention, Containment and Treatment of COVID-19.

a) Chair, my delegation believes in the basic principle that IP protection should be a force for development and human progress, and should not be seen as an end in itself. In this context, and as explained by other delegations before us, the proposed TRIPS Waiver will serve all of us, all people across the world, to fast track local production and equitable distribution, as well as ensure timely and affordable access to vaccines and other medicines, all in a concerted global effort to end this pandemic. My delegation attaches great importance to the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights, but we also recognise that this must be counter-balanced with the attainment of the greater public good.

Madam Chair,

The present TRIPS flexibilities contained in Articles 31 and 31*bis* were never intended to cater for a global pandemic of this magnitude. These articles are applied at a national level, and on a case by case basis. The challenges of implementing the compulsory licence system have been well documented and discussed in previous sessions of the TRIPS Council. Similarly, the voluntary licence system is opaque: it is fraught with secrecy, and relies on the benevolence of patent and other IP holders.

Chairperson,

We commend efforts by other international organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) COVID-19 Technology Access Pool (C-TAP), ACT Accelerator, COVAX Facility and COVAX AMC. In this context we believe that the TRIPS Waiver proposal will complement, and also serve to off-set some of the challenges faced by these various mechanisms in responding adequately, effectively and timely to this global health emergency. While commendable, we believe that initiatives in other organizations cannot be used as a barrier or excuse for the WTO and its Members to refrain from taking necessary actions to save life and livelihoods in all our countries.

As we tackle the present pandemic, let us all recall that this is not the first time that an Article IX waiver has been invoked for health purposes. At the Doha **Ministerial meeting,** under the stewardship of the Zimbabwe Permanent Representative, Ambassador Chidyausiku who was the TRIPSCouncil Chair, the Ministers issued the Declaration on the TRIPS agreement and public health.

Subsequently in 2003, Members came together and agreed on the waiver related to Paragraph 6 of the Doha Declaration. Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG-3) related to good health and wellbeing behoves upon us to rise to our collective responsibilities, and agree to this proposal to save life and livelihoods everywhere, and not leave anyone behind.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to observe that, while there has been some progress in the development of vaccines in the last few months, the proposed waiver will give the much needed boost, necessary to promote local production of, and accelerated the timely, equitable and affordable access to, safe and effective life-serving vaccines.

We are therefore grateful to South Africa and India for initiating this important proposal, which we are very pleased to support as a co-sponsor.

Madam Chair

I thank you.