**MSF welcomes African Union’s motion supporting IP waiver proposal at WTO**

*Geneva, 22 February 2021* – In a report released today sharing decisions of 34th meeting of the Assembly of the Union, the African Union (AU) expressed its support to intellectual property (IP) waiver proposal being discussed at the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) welcomes this endorsement by the AU to support this landmark proposal at the WTO that would allow countries to choose not to apply or enforce certain types of IP on COVID-19 medical tools during the pandemic. In the last few months, several international organisations including the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Unitaid and the Drugs for Neglected Diseases *initiative* (DND*i*) have issued statements supporting this critical waiver.

The proposal initiated by India and South Africa is now being officially co-sponsored by Eswatini, Kenya, Mozambique, Pakistan, Mongolia, Venezuela, Bolivia and Egypt. However, a small group of WTO members including the EU, UK, US, Japan, Switzerland and Australia continue to withhold their support.

***Candice Sehoma, Access Campaign Advocacy Officer, MSF South Africa:***

“By politically endorsing this landmark proposal, the African Union is giving a crucial boost of support from the continent for waiving intellectual property during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is disappointing that several developed countries are continuing to stall this landmark waiver effort against the backdrop of a raging pandemic. As South Africa, India and other official co-sponsoring countries urgently need support from as many countries as possible to make this proposal a reality, we hope to see all African countries now come on board as official co-sponsors.

Ensuring access to equitable and affordable medical tools needed to respond to this pandemic can no longer simply be left to corporations who continue to follow the business-as-usual approach of profit maximisation. Governments must act now to reach consensus on this game-changing proposal and fulfill their obligations to protect public health. We also call on opposing countries to quit stalling this critical waiver and instead step out of the negotiations, allowing other countries to reach an early consensus.”