

# WTO WORKSHOP ON TRADE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

GENEVA, 6 TO 10 NOVEMBER 2017

## OPENING REMARKS BY DDG XIAOZHUN YI

MONDAY, 6 NOVEMBER 2016, 9:00, ROOM E

1. Good morning. I would like to welcome you to the Workshop on Trade and Public Health which the WTO Secretariat is organizing for the thirteenth year in close collaboration with the World Health Organization and the World Intellectual Property Organization.
2. The importance of health is highlighted by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, specifically Goal 3, which calls upon the international community to "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages".<sup>1</sup> It puts the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health in a central place to support both research and development of new medicines and access to affordable medicines. The WTO is committed to making its contribution to the achievement of this goal and this Workshop certainly is an integral part of our efforts.
3. Health is clearly one of the more complex policy environments that decision-makers are required to work with in preparing practical solutions to contemporary challenges. And these require, in turn, a multidimensional policy approach that is the very basis for key players from the public and private sector to provide effective responses.

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<sup>1</sup> Target: Support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and noncommunicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries, provide access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines, in accordance with the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which affirms the right of developing countries to use to the full the provisions in the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights regarding flexibilities to protect public health, and, in particular, provide access to medicines for all.

4. The recognition of the need for policy coherence and complementarity has been recognized by trade ministers, when they adopted the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, in 2001. Ever since, it has been guiding our trilateral cooperation with colleagues from the WHO and WIPO. In 2013, the Study on "Promoting Access to Medical Technologies: Intersections between Public Health, Intellectual Property and Trade" emphasized the need for a holistic approach when working on issues at the crossroad between health and trade. Trilateral efforts have also yielded a series of technical symposia. The seventh symposium, on 26 February 2018, will consider the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals at the Crossroad between Health, IP and Trade.

5. This well-established complementarity of the three key organizations working on issues at the crossroad between trade and health also needs to be reflected at the domestic level by the collaboration between authorities responsible for health, intellectual property and trade.

6. Now, let's focus on this Workshop, for which the content and design has considerably evolved over the last 12 years. This is because discussions in the TRIPS Council and other *fora*, as well as feedback from participants and colleagues, stressed the need to move from a highly specialized activity towards a more comprehensive approach.

7. This week's programme will therefore expose you to the various policy dimensions as they affect public health, and how these relate to multilateral trade agreements. This should equip you with the tools to analyse and formulate practical and effective policy choices and with a global network of colleagues to keep working with.

8. To do so, we will cover, from different angles, the interrelation between health and trade. While some of the emphasis is on the link between intellectual property rights with innovation and access in the

pharmaceutical sector, the programme also includes a wide range of other cross-cutting issues and public health determinants, such as: procurement; competition; tariffs; health services; technical barriers to trade; sanitary and phytosanitary measures; as well as regulatory issues to ensure access to safe, high quality and effective medicines.

9. The entry into force of the Protocol Amending the TRIPS Agreement, in January this year, is a milestone in the short history of the WTO. It made an additional public health flexibility an integral and permanent part of the TRIPS Agreement. It provides a secure legal pathway to the most vulnerable WTO Members that primarily rely on the import of medicines from countries in which these medicines are patent-protected.

10. In order to support your respective authorities in making effective use of this new mechanism, you will have a full day of presentations and discussions that will focus on special compulsory licences for export of medicines. In response to demands by WTO Members, the objective of the sessions on Wednesday is to look at the best and most practical way to use this procurement tool to secure access to affordable medicines.

11. Finally, two thematic breakout sessions will allow you to engage in a dialogue on topical and current health-related issues: one session will focus on antimicrobial resistance; and another on non-communicable diseases.

12. I am very pleased to see that it has been possible to bring together such an eminent group of experts with different professional backgrounds from all regions of the world. Today's challenges can only be addressed by global and multidisciplinary collaborative efforts. I trust that your contributions will make discussions more captivating, drawing on your own experience on health, trade and intellectual property issues.

13. This said, and given the breadth of issues to be covered, you will not have time to discuss all of them in a very detailed fashion. Therefore, I invite you to regard this training activity only as the beginning of a long journey. You will have to continuously deepen your knowledge and also share it with other colleagues upon your return to capital.

14. I would like to thank our colleagues from WHO and WIPO for their continuous collaboration, as well as invited speakers from UNCTAD, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Member delegations, the private sector and civil society. Their contributions make this Workshop meaningful. Last but not least, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to colleagues from the WTO Secretariat, who have been working hard on the organization and delivery of this activity.

15. Thank you.