Closing remarks for Chair

Let me share with you some of the salient points of the discussion we had today in the workshop.

- There seemed to be broad agreement in the room that technology transfer remains a key determinant of increased labour productivity, and thus of economic growth and development.

- Trade was seen as an important factor in the transfer of technology. Trade's role as a direct vehicle for technology transfer came in the shape of imports of machinery, equipment, and services. Global value chains, diffused in many industries and across countries, can foster innovation, learning and up gradation in developing country firms.

- But trade was also linked to other means of technology transfer, such as foreign direct investment, licensing, non-equity modes of production, global value chains, and temporary labour movement, including through GATS Mode 4.

- In virtually all sessions, crucial factors for both the transfer and absorption of technology were identified. These included education and skills, appropriate institutional and policy environments, and the linking of education and research institutions to other market actors.

- The role of R&D institutions and knowledge centres in fostering technology and innovation was highlighted. A strong nexus between the relevant institutions (universities, research institutes and IP offices) can bring effective results in the area of technology and innovation.

- The changing geography of trade and innovation was highlighted, particularly for environmental technologies: trade in some green technologies is increasingly South-South, and developing countries (above all China) are

becoming leading patent applicants for some types of green energy technology.

- At the same time, green technologies are a subject of increasing trade tension, as evidenced by anti-dumping and countervailing duties.

- Many speakers stressed the need for fact-based discussions of technology transfer, since obstacles and technology needs can vary considerably from one case to the next. Broadly speaking, however, speakers agreed that innovation and IP policies and long term development strategies should not be treated in isolation, but rather addressed in a holistic manner, to foster technology, innovation and trade.

- In terms of international agreements and their implications for technology transfer, speakers highlighted the positive role of the WTO TRIPS Agreement, though not without raising some questions, not least in light of the heterogeneity of countries or the collective pursuit of international goals such as environmental protection.

- One speaker argued that for countries at lower stages of development, weaker IP protections for some might be more appropriate. Here, too, a call was made for a pragmatic approach to the debate: it was stressed that countries can reach a high level of prosperity as either net exporters or importers of technology, and what is important is that a country be able to acquire the technology it needs and apply it appropriately.

- While trade agreements were seen as potentially encouraging technology transfer, not least by reducing policy uncertainty, panellists stressed that trade agreements were only one of several factors affecting technology transfer.

- Moreover, one speaker noted that the poorest countries seem to not have benefitted from technology transfer.

Technology transfer to LDCs could be improved by providing better funding opportunities to investment in technology adaptation and by fostering linkages between developed and developing country research institutions.

- The session on host and home country conditions for trade and transfer of technology heard some contrasting views on the balance between the total sum of global innovation and inducements to technology transfer, but speakers generally agreed investment promotion and skills-enhancement programmes can create a supportive environment for technology transfer. One speaker raised the possibility a new agreement on Trade and Transfer of Technology.

- In our final session, we heard that businesses that operate online take part in trade in higher numbers, and have a higher survival rate, than those that do not. The successes of some countries in using ICT to boost economic growth and development can and indeed have been emulated in other developing countries – this, too, is a form of technology transfer.

- In that last session as well, we heard a call for pragmatic policymaking based on empirical knowledge. For instance, it is hard to support the development of business clusters when a government does not know what potential clusters already exist. Cluster mapping can help identify where technology transfer activities might yield the highest dividends.