

WTO WORKSHOP ON TRADE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

GENEVA, 17 TO 21 OCTOBER 2016

OPENING REMARKS BY DDG XIAOZHUN YI

MONDAY, 17 OCTOBER, 2016, 9:00, ROOM E

1. Good morning. I would like to welcome you to the Workshop on Trade and Public Health, organized in collaboration with the World Health Organization and the World Intellectual Property Organization.
2. The importance of health has recently been 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".¹ It puts the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health in a central place to support both R&D 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 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.

¹ 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 guiding our trilateral cooperation with colleagues from the WHO and WIPO for many years. 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 the interphase between health and trade. Trilateral efforts have also yielded a series of technical symposia on topical issues, including pricing and procurement policies, patent information and innovation-related issues. The sixth such symposium will take place next week and will discuss issues around antimicrobial resistance and how to foster innovation, access and appropriate use of antibiotics.

5. This 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 week. This Trade and Public Health Workshop has evolved over the last 11 years. Discussions in the TRIPS Council and other *fora*, as well as feedback from participants and colleagues, stressed the need to move from highly specialized activities 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 "Innovation" and "Access" Dimensions, 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. These angles need to be covered in order to provide you with a comprehensive set of tools to address health and trade challenges, domestically, regionally and multilaterally.

9. This year's Workshop also includes a full day of presentations and discussions that will focus on "Making Effective Use of Special Compulsory Licences for Export: A Procurement Tool for Medicines". The imminent entry into force of the Protocol Amending the TRIPS Agreement will make this public health flexibility an integral and permanent part of the TRIPS Agreement. This will benefit the most vulnerable WTO Members that, particularly, rely on the import of medicines. The objective of the Wednesday sessions is to look at the best and most practical way to use this tool to secure access to affordable medicines.

10. To complement the introduction to the various policy dimensions, two thematic breakout sessions will allow you to engage in a dialogue on topical issues: one on non-communicable diseases; and another on access to medicines and human rights.

11. I am very pleased to see that it has been possible to bring together such an eminent group of experts from all regions of the world. Feel free to comment, question and discuss. Today's challenges can only be addressed by global collaborative efforts. I trust that you will make discussions more captivating, drawing on your own experience on health, trade and intellectual property issues.

12. 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.

13. I would like to thank our colleagues from WHO and WIPO for their continuous collaboration, as well as invited speakers from UNCTAD, UNAIDS, Member delegations, the private sector and civil society. Your contributions make this Workshop meaningful. Last but not least, sincere appreciation for colleagues from the WTO Secretariat, who have been working on the organization and delivery of this activity.

14. I am honoured to open this substantive and important activity. I wish you a fruitful week.

15. Thank you.