

TALKING POINTS – OPENING SESSION

DDG ANABEL GONZÁLEZ

29 June 2021 – Opening Session from 10:00 to 10:15 (CET) – Zoom

- Greetings from Geneva. I am Anabel González, Deputy Director-General of the World Trade Organization. Welcome to the Technical Symposium on COVID-19 Vaccine Supply Chain and Regulatory Transparency.
- The WTO has been actively working on trade and public health-related issues since 2001, when Members adopted the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health. Over this time, the WTO has promoted a holistic and multi-disciplinary approach which has entailed invaluable partnerships with sister international organizations.
- Exemplifying this continuous collaboration, at all levels, we are privileged today to welcome my colleagues Dr Mariângela Batista Galvão Simão, Assistant Director-General for Access to Medicines and Health Products at the World Health Organization; and Mr Ricardo Treviño Chapa, Deputy Secretary-General at the World Customs Organization.
- Our objective today is to improve public and policymaker understanding at the technical level of the operation of global COVID-19 vaccine and input supply chains. We will also look at the role that trade policy can play in facilitating the cross-border movement of vaccine inputs, as well as the critical role of regulatory transparency and cooperation to secure equitable access.
- We are acutely conscious that policymakers across the globe are wrestling with pressing practical issues as they seek to map their way through the pandemic, and we are working with a wide range of partners to play our role in creating a sound, inclusive and timely information base to support critical policy choices.
- Today, close to 30 economies are projected to produce COVID-19 vaccines by the end of 2021, with 16 of those economies outside the G20. Equitable worldwide access to COVID-19 vaccines is necessary for economic growth and for trade to bounce back from the pandemic.
- Trade has been a positive force during the pandemic by enabling access to much-needed medical supplies around the world. Even as the value of global merchandise trade shrank by more than 8% in 2020, trade in medical supplies increased by 16%, and by 50% for personal protective equipment. Trade is a tool that can be leveraged to facilitate access. Members have acknowledged this and have made several proposals related to trade and public health, aimed at facilitating trade and access to medical goods. Delegations are actively engaged in discussions about possible elements for inclusion in a deliverable at the 12th Ministerial Conference, later this year. A strong multilateral trading system will contribute to create a fertile ground for global recovery, resilience, and preparedness. The WTO will continue to promote a holistic and multi-disciplinary approach to trade and public health issues.

- We owe it to the billions of people that have not yet been vaccinated to do everything in our power to ensure that these cross-border movements are as smooth as possible, so that vaccine manufacturing can meet these demands. Events like this Technical Symposium aim to map and examine the unprecedented challenges that we have been facing; and, also to explore new ways to cooperate towards finding practical solutions to scale up the global COVID-19 response and address gaps in the global production and distribution of vaccines, personal protective equipment and other medical technologies.
- The WTO can contribute in different ways to ramp up production and foster vaccine equity, including, but not limited to:
 - Supporting efforts to identify and reduce export restrictions and to put trade facilitating measures in place;
 - Fostering cooperation and partnerships, including through voluntary licensing and technology transfer, as well as the effective implementation and use of policy options available in the WTO System;
 - Monitoring trade policies and ensuring transparency;
 - Contributing to building the capacity of regulatory authorities that need to ensure safety, quality and efficacy of vaccines and other medical products; and
 - Promoting the collection of granular trade data in support of facilitating vaccine manufacturing and supply chains.
- I trust today's Symposium will generate many important insights, and feed into continuing efforts to strengthen the information needed to inform trade policy approaches to the on-going challenge that COVID-19 presents. We wish to conclude today's conversation not only with a clearer picture of this complex landscape, but also practical ideas for taking this work forward in a collaborative and open way.
- Dr Ngozi has called on us all to meet the challenge of vaccine equity. She has unambiguously articulated the role that she sees trade as playing in this process. I therefore hope that today's event, and our future collaboration, will generate practical insights that we can use both to identify and overcome bottlenecks in the vaccine and inputs supply chains. While the immediate challenge concerns vaccines, we will also undertake a preliminary assessment of the challenges for other medical technologies critical to the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, laying the groundwork for future efforts in that direction.
- To make the most of our time together, I will leave it to you to consult the program and the biographical data for the impressive slate of speakers who have kindly agreed to take part today. You may find these on the WTO website.
- With that, let me pass over to our first speaker, Dr Mariângela Batista Galvão Simão, WHO Assistant Director General. Mariângela, you have the floor.

[Mariângela Batista Galvão Simão, WHO Assistant Director General takes the floor]

- Thank you, Mariângela. I now offer the floor to Ricardo Treviño Chapa, Deputy Secretary General, WCO. Ricardo, you have the floor.

[Ricardo Treviño Chapa, WCO Deputy Secretary General, takes the floor.]

- Thank you, Mariângela and Ricardo, for joining us. We look forward to continuing our strong collaboration with your organizations, as we move forward in our work related to trade and public health.
- Now, let's get to work and move to our first session. I will pass the relay to Robert Koopman, Chief Economist and Director of the Economic Research and Statistics Division of the WTO Secretariat.
- Bob, the floor is yours.

[Robert Koopman starts Session 2.]
