

# Promoting Access to Medical Technologies and Innovation

Intersections between public health, intellectual property and trade



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trade



**World Health  
Organization**



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# Foreword by the Directors-General

Public health has been a priority for global action for many years. The right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health is a universal human right, just as the burden of disease is shared by all humanity.

The constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO) underscores that achievements by any state in the promotion and protection of health are of value to all. In the age of globalization, progress made in public health in one country has an impact on the international community as a whole. Consequently, a compelling case can be made for effective international cooperation in public health, and such cooperation is an essential foundation for sustainable development.

Public health and medical technologies are an important focus of the international system, including in the system-wide work of the United Nations – most notably in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The very founding objective of the WHO is the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health. In addition, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) – in line with the mandates given to them by governments and their respective areas of expertise – have increasingly stepped up their efforts to support global endeavours to improve health outcomes.

International cooperation on public health takes many forms. Recent years have seen an intensified focus on the role of medical technologies – both the innovation processes that lead to new technologies and the ways in which these technologies are disseminated in health systems. Access to essential medicines as a dimension of the right to health has been a major concern for several decades. Now, however, the focus has broadened to consider how to promote the requisite innovation, how to address neglected health needs, and how to ensure equitable access to all vital medical technologies, including

by the Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health (Doha Declaration), adopted on 14 November 2001 at the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the WTO. That Declaration was followed by a number of significant developments:

- The creation of new and innovative financing and procurement mechanisms, leading to significantly increased funding for medicines procurement and vaccine development.
- An evolving and more diverse pharmaceutical industry, and increasing innovative capacity in some developing countries.
- Innovative approaches to medical research and development (R&D) and its financing – particularly for neglected diseases – with an emphasis on public-private initiatives to develop required medical technologies.
- Renewed attention to the cost-effectiveness of national health systems.
- Growing global awareness of the impact of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) on health and socio-economic development, especially in developing countries.
- Increasing recognition of the need to move towards universal health coverage.
- Insights into the intersections between public health, the IP system, trade and competition rules, and measures to promote innovation and access to medical technologies.
- Better, more comprehensive and more accessible data on prices, access, patents and trade, enhancing the empirical base for informed priority setting and policy decisions.
- Greater policy coherence and practical cooperation on the intersection of health policy, trade and IP issues within the broader perspectives established by the

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