

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION TO CSTD INTERSESSIONAL PANEL, 18 January 2021

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The discussion on what the international community can do requires characterizing the current situation of S&T in the global context, particularly as it relates to health technologies:

-There is a significant North-South asymmetry in the capacity to generate S&T, despite the fact that the participation of developing countries in global R&D increased in the last 20 years from about 6% to 38% (23% is accounted for by China alone).

-Developing countries have made growing payments of royalties for the use of intellectual property since the adoption of the TRIPS Agreement, without a measurable impact on their capacity to deploy S&T to address development challenges.

-Sometimes the mere registration of patents is considered an indicator of innovation. However, patents are a poor indicator. What counts is what technologies are effectively incorporated into the production of goods & services and whether developing countries have effective access to them.

-Technology transfer is crucial for development. There are several UN mechanisms for facilitating access to technologies that need to be expanded and reinforced. They include the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, the Technology Bank for LDCs and WIPO Green. Specifically in the area of health we find the Medicines Patent Pool whose sublicensees to produce and sell certain medicines have had a significant impact although they have not reached all developing countries (despite the efforts made) and C-TAP, the technology access pool for COVID 19 technologies created under the auspices of the WHO, supported by 40 countries but not by the pharmaceutical industry.

In this context, revitalizing the international agenda on technology transfer is crucial to help developing countries realize the right to development. Four recommendations may be submitted in this regard:

1) Specific sections of the above mentioned general mechanisms for technology transfer may be devoted to health technologies.

2) South-South and Triangular Cooperation should be promoted. For instance, a mapping of possible providers of digital health technologies (already advanced in some developing countries) could be conducted.

3) A new model for R&D in health technologies, not dependent on the appropriation of innovations but on their availability as public goods, need to be designed and implemented (there were already discussions in this regard at the WHO some years ago). The aim should be to ensure unrestricted access to technologies, as mentioned by the Deputy Secretary General of UNCTAD in her introductory remarks.

4) The proposed waiver of TRIPS obligations in relation to COVID-19 related technologies, if approved, will create certainty and encourage a wider use of technologies at the global scale to fight the pandemic. The proposal by India, South Africa and other developing countries should be further supported.