PMAC PRINCE MAHIDOL AWARD CONFERENCE 2021

WS201

ASSESSING THE SITUATION OF COVID-19 AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND HEALTH

| BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic brings numerous unexpected problems with wide impacts beyond health. Significant increase in demands of the healthcare services and relevant supplies in responding to the disease results in shortage of supplies worldwide. Temporary export restriction is immediately introduced in more than 80 countries which the top five products include face and eye protection, protective garments, gloves, sanitizer and disinfectants, pharmaceuticals[1]. Other countries take the utmost measurement with export prohibition on medical supplies, while some has a more subtle procedure with a licensing or permit requirements to export[2]. Undeniably, the domino effects cannot be avoided since no country has the ability to produce all the needed products, still an effort to alleviate the shortage problem for many countries is either by the reduction on tariff or suspension on certification requirement on their import aspect. However, suspension on commercial flights have spiked air fright prices as demand surges, still an increase in air freights cannot yet meet the capacity, while some borders remains open, land freight is being slow down due to complicated procedures which increase delay and costs. The restriction poses obstacles especially in pharmaceutical drug as China who is the key raw material suppliers and India who is the major producer for generic drugs lock down their countries[3] and other sites are shut down due to lack of raw materials or site affected the pandemic.

This imbalance of market mechanism disrupts global supply chain as countries trying to secure medical supplies and raw material shortage drive ups its price where payment terms of 50% upfront payment required, delivery delay as highest-paying customers move to the front and excessive mark-ups create new economic model that offer significant advantages to only those who can afford[4]. Smuggling of substandard medicine is another major issue to consider, especially in the poorer countries. The rising in demand, falling in supply and distracted regulators widen opportunities for substandard medicines as countries receive falsifies medicines supplies related to COVID-19[5], as well as poor quality medicines for diabetes, heart disease, depression, and rheumatism, cancer[6]. This subsequently adds burden to the health systems.

The process of work to prepare for this session is to commissioned expert(s) to review the situation and analyze the impact of international trade on health during COVID-19 especially access to medicine and medical devices. This commissioned paper will be provided as an input to the webinar discussion.

[1] https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/covid19_e/export_prohibitions_report_e.pdf

[2] https://www.macmap.org/en/covid19

[3] https://hub.jhu.edu/2020/04/06/goker-aydin-global-supply-chain/

[4]https://blogs.worldbank.org/health/covid-19-coronavirus-panic-buying-and-its-impact-global-health-supply-chains

[5] https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/31-03-2020-medical-product-alert-n-3-2020

[6] https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/the-covid-19-pandemic-increases-the-chances-that-other-medicines-wont-work

| OBJECTIVES

To discuss the situation of COVID-19 and implication on international trade and health.



Moderator

Manisha Shridhar

WHO SEARO Regional Advisor

World Health Organization
India

Dr Manisha Shridhar, Regional Advisor, World Health Organization- South East Asia Regional Office WHO-SEARO, India

Dr Manisha Shridhar WHO- SEARO works on Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs), Regulation and trade for health and medical products (medicines, vaccines, diagnostics and medical devices). That includes trade and legal issues relating to public health e.g. in areas of communicable diseases, pandemic influenza preparedness framework, traditional medicines, international health regulations, non-communicable diseases (NCDs), tobacco control and nutrition.

Dr Shridhar received her Master's degree in Intellectual Property Law with specialization in Patent and Biotechnology Law and is a certified Mediator for IPRs disputes from Franklin Pierce Law Center, Concord, USA. She has an MSc Public Health degree from London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, a Bachelor of Science (Botany, Zoology, Chemistry) from Delhi University, and Masters in Public Administration from Punjab University, Chandigarh, India. Her Doctorate on "Technology Innovation and Patent Activity in Indian Industry" is from Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi.

As member of the Indian Administrative Service, Dr Shridhar worked in different capacities in Government of India. She was Principal Secretary in the State Government of Himachal Pradesh where she managed departments of Health, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, Cooperation, Town and Country Planning, Housing and Urban Development, Agriculture and Horticulture from time to time. She was District Magistrate in the state capital district of Shimla and in the district of Kangra at Dharamsala where she has performed quasi-judicial functions and also was responsible for public health government programs. She functioned as President of the District Red Cross Society and was associated with numerous health based voluntary associations. Dr. Shridhar served as the Joint Secretary with the Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises in the Government of India where, in addition to administrative assignments she prepared documents and reports on policy reform for growth and development of micro enterprises. She has drafted policy and briefing documents for WTO negotiations and other free trade agreements.

As Head of Training Research and Development Wing in the National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie, she designed and conducted training programs for senior Civil Servants from India and Sri Lanka on IPR and WTO issues. Dr Shridhar has written extensively and prepared case studies, study material for courses. She has scripted and produced a film on IPRs for World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). She assisted United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) on Geographical Indications for traditional products. Dr Shridhar is fluent in Hindi, English and French.