

Access to medicines

The Council continued its discussion of the UN Secretary-General's High Level Panel Report on access to medicines, and on the issue more generally. Many WTO members said they were committed to ensuring access to medicines.

Some WTO members reiterated the Report's recommendations, including the call for rigorous definitions of criteria for granting pharmaceutical patents, and the need to preserve the right of WTO members to use flexibilities allowed under the WTO's intellectual property rules. While recognizing that this was not only an IP issue, some members showed support for continuing a constructive discussion of IP rights and access to medicine at the next TRIPS Council, covering issues such as patentability criteria, flexibilities, and exceptions and limitations to patent rights.

Some WTO members reiterated their concerns about the narrow scope of the Report focusing on "policy incoherence". A few members said they need more time to consider the recommendations. In the meantime, they encouraged members to focus work on how to effectively implement the revised TRIPS Agreement to ease access to affordable medicines.

Amendment to the TRIPS Agreement

Oman became the latest WTO member to accept the Protocol Amending the TRIPS Agreement, the chair informed members. Oman deposited its instrument of acceptance with Director-General Roberto Azevêdo on 1 March, making it the first member to do so since the revised TRIPS Agreement entered into force on 23 January 2017.

At the Council's meeting in January, the call by the previous chair of the Council, Ambassador Mero of Tanzania, for members "to look into how to make this new procurement tool work effectively so that it delivers concrete results in practice" was echoed by many delegations. As a first step, the Council heard a presentation by the WTO Secretariat on the notification process to be followed by members who are seeking to export generic medicines produced under the special compulsory licensing mechanism. More information can be found on a dedicated [webpage](#).