



STATEMENT

WTO Ministerial Conference in Abu Dhabi an opportunity to strengthen trade and health agenda

23 FEBRUARY 2024, GENEVA - The meeting of global trade ministers at the World Trade Organization's [13th Ministerial Conference in Abu Dhabi](#) (MC13) offers an important opportunity to build on and strengthen the open and rules-based international trading system to support better health outcomes for people across the world and help address future health crises.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored that, regardless of the nature of the next unforeseen global health threat, progress will depend on science, voluntary partnerships, and collective action. An effective intellectual property framework is essential to incentivizing scientific progress. It underpins the innovation ecosystem that has driven decades of investment in medical research and development, contributing to remarkable improvements in global health over the past fifty years. Moreover, this framework enables voluntary partnerships which are critical in the rapid scale up of the production of therapeutics and vaccines – supporting global access to these products.

Any waiver of commitments to protect intellectual property would undermine these successes and weaken our ability to respond to future health emergencies. Ministers should reject expanding the TRIPS waiver to COVID-19 therapeutics and diagnostics during MC13, and references to transfer of technology should be on a voluntary basis and aligned with existing WTO rules.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the resilience embedded in global medicine supply chains ensured a continuous flow of essential medicines, vaccines, and diagnostics to millions of people, even in the face of border challenges and logistical constraints. These supply chains can be further strengthened by eliminating trade barriers. This is particularly important when considering global health security and responding to health emergencies, where the need to expedite the development and production of new medical countermeasures is essential.

WTO member states should commit to a comprehensive trade and health agenda that will strengthen the innovation ecosystem, remove trade barriers, promote trade facilitation, strengthen regulatory systems, and address under-resourced healthcare infrastructure. We look forward to continued engagement on these important issues.

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About ABPI

The [ABPI](#) exists to make the UK the best place in the world to research, develop and access medicines and vaccines to improve patient care. We represent companies of all sizes which invest in making and discovering medicines and vaccines to enhance and save the lives of millions of people around the world. In England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, we work in partnership with governments and the NHS so that patients can get new treatments faster and the NHS can plan how much it spends on medicines. Every day, our members partner with healthcare professionals, academics and patient organisations to find new solutions to unmet health needs.

About BIO

[BIO](#) is the world's largest trade association representing biotechnology companies, academic institutions, state biotechnology centers and related organizations across the United States and in more than 30 other nations.

About EFPIA

The [European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations \(EFPIA\)](#) represents the biopharmaceutical industry operating in Europe. Through its direct membership of 36 national associations, 39 leading pharmaceutical companies and a growing number of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), EFPIA's mission is to create a collaborative environment that enables our members to innovate, discover, develop, and deliver new therapies and vaccines for people across Europe, as well as contribute to the European economy.

About IMC

[Innovative Medicines Canada \(IMC\)](#) is the national association representing the voice of Canada's innovative pharmaceutical industry. The association advocates for policies that enable the discovery, development, and delivery of innovative medicines and vaccines to improve the lives of all Canadians and supports the members' commitment to being a valued partner in the Canadian healthcare system. The association represents 47 companies who invest nearly \$1.2 billion in R&D annually, fueling Canada's knowledge-based economy, while contributing \$8 billion to Canada's economy. Guided by the Code of Ethical Practices, all members work with governments, private payers, healthcare professionals, and stakeholders in a highly ethical manner.

About IFPMA

The [International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations \(IFPMA\)](#) represents over 90 innovative pharmaceutical companies and associations around the world. Our industry's almost three million employees discover, develop, and deliver medicines and vaccines that advance global health. Based in Geneva, IFPMA has official relations with the United Nations and contributes industry expertise to help the global health community improve the lives of people everywhere.

About Interpharma

[Interpharma](#), the association of Switzerland's research-based pharmaceutical industry, was founded in Basel in 1933. Interpharma informs the public about issues that are important to the research-based pharmaceutical industry in Switzerland, including the pharma market in Switzerland, healthcare and biomedical research.

About JPMA

The [Japan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association \(JPMA\)](#) is a voluntary association comprising 71 research-oriented pharmaceutical companies. JPMA has been contributing to advancing global healthcare through the development of innovative ethical drugs, facilitating sound development of the pharmaceutical industry through proactively establishing policies and recommendations in response to globalization and enhancing public understanding of pharmaceuticals.

About Leem

[Leem](#) is the French industry association which represents drug companies operating in France. Leem has over 280 member companies representing a total workforce of 106 000 employees (around 4% of industrial employment in France) and a revenue of €63 billion (of which half are exports). As the interlocutor between industry and policy makers, Leem is the driving force behind proposals to promote France's attractiveness as an industrial hub and to pursue a healthcare policy geared towards patients' needs.

About Medicines Australia

[Medicines Australia](#) leads the research-based pharmaceutical industry of Australia. Our members discover, develop and manufacture the medicines that are the foundation of a healthy and prosperous society, including prescription pharmaceutical products, biotherapeutic products and vaccines. Our members invest in Australian medical research and take local discoveries and developments to the world. We are trusted partners in the medicines ecosystem, ensuring that our conduct is of the highest ethical standard, and that the environment in which we provide access to our medicines is sustainable and fair.

About PhRMA

The [Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America \(PhRMA\)](#) represents the country's leading innovative biopharmaceutical research companies, which are devoted to discovering and developing medicines that enable patients to live longer, healthier and more productive lives. Over the last decade, PhRMA member companies have more than doubled their annual investment in the search for new treatments and cures, including nearly \$101 billion in 2022 alone.

About VFA

The [Association of Research-based Pharmaceutical Companies \(VFA\)](#) is the trade association of the innovative pharmaceutical industry in Germany. It represents the interests of 49 world's leading manufacturers and more than 100 subsidiaries and affiliated companies in the health, research and economic policy. The members of the VFA up about two-thirds of the German pharmaceutical market and employ approximately 95,000 employees in Germany. 21,000 of whom work in research and development.

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