**Mr. Taubman, World Trade Organization**

*Unofficial automated transcript of statement at access to vaccines seminar*

8 December 2021

As you know, a WTO member governments continue to conduct an intensive, critically important debate about the question of access to vaccines and other medicines in response to this devastating pandemic. As a, as a worker in the secretary, it's not my role to intervene or comment at that level while governments work towards an agreed upon response that said the recent consensus decision, profitable health, the same way.

The creation of an international instrument on pennant on ONTAP on pandemic response is at see signal. I think of a common desire to work practically together and perhaps to learn from an act on the heartless from the global response to the pandemic over the traumatic past two years, others today have already well articulated the fundamental human [00:25:00] rights imperative for universal access to COVID vaccines, the morally appalling and socially devastating effect of extreme vaccine inequities, the regressive effect of the economic impact of the pandemic on those least able to show up in this bubble and the inevitable consequence of such inequities Lexus in the forward, new and unpredictable variance of the virus, which in turn creates further disruption and hardship again with regressive and inequitable impact.

We've seen this impact directly last week when the governments would choose a meet in Geneva at ministerial level, in order, we had hoped to reach the necessary political consensus on the pandemic response on the part of WTO members, including the contribution of trade policy settings, pending intellectual property issues, which other speakers have broadly addressed instead of the emergence of the Omnicon variant on the Eve of the ministerial conference led to its abroad postponement [00:26:00] due to in fact, two concerns about inequity and concerns about of course, public public.

Uh, overall concerns that all government would need to engage with an equal force and other action concerned about public health. So this is disruption is itself a timely and telling consequence of the stark inequities in vaccine rollout. However, we can only hope that it has spurred members to work towards an urgently needed outcome.

control Wella has pointed out that 7 billion people are waiting for us on trips and pandemic response. The new on the Cron variant, she said has reminded us once again, of the urgency of achieving equitable access to vaccines in every country in the world. The chair of the conference and vice chair is immediately called for prioritizing outcomes on the pandemic [00:27:00] response, including a solution on the proposed IP waiver.

Given the emerging global health situation, Bertrand cozy has said that a comprehensive response to the pandemic must include intellectual property. When she is urging all sides to come together, to find a compromise at my much more modest this level, I want to offer some practical perspectives on access to vaccines and other medicines in the fulfillment of the right to health.

We know of course from our human rights colleagues. Uh, Mr. Grover has pointed it out and indeed human rights council resolution 2314, that access to medicines is one of the fundamental elements in achieving progressively the full realization of everyone's, right, the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health.

We also know from our public health colleagues and indeed from the very constitution of the who I quote the health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and [00:28:00] security. The achievement of any state in the promotion and protection of health is a value to an equal development in different countries in the promotion of health and control of disease, especially communicable disease is a common danger, a clear signal in the very constitution of mutual interdependence and the need for solidarity and equity in the global response, or therefore both responsibilities and aspirations of the highest order practical and pragmatic necessities.

If the suffering and havoc from the pandemic are to be brought to an end now technical assistance and policy support for governments in this field is undertaken in close consultation and cooperation with our international partners consciously inclusive, not only as a matter of principle, but also as it is only practical and effective.

Technical assistance and policy support for governments provided by the World Trade Organization is founded on a holistic and integrated approach, rather than focusing on a narrow areas of expertise. In framing the trilateral cooperation with the World Health Organization and the RPO on access to medical technologies, it the human rights dimension was paramount. And indeed it was the starting point in setting up the policy framework for access to med system.

We use as our overall guide, by contrast, the intersecting areas of trade and public health are understood only as instruments to broader social goals. And thus are not ends in themselves. Now, 2020 joint publication, so-called chronic from study, perhaps it's not very clearly as the foundation of our work.

This work has been recently recharged and re-energized directly by the three directors general Tetris, Mr. Tang. And , this is a critical point in dealing with the IP dimension in addressing the relationship between the trips agreement and human rights. In 2011, when indeed inequities of access to HIV aids [00:30:00] medicines were huge, but then high commissioner for human rights issued a timely analysis pointing out that human rights are categorically different from IP rights, the former absolute failure in themselves in Ireland and universe, by contrast IP rights, I contingent subject to public interest considerations justified not in themselves, but only as a means to put a pause again, territorially bound transferable.

And genuine generally time limited. This has two practical consequences for cooperation that I think are most important in confronting the pandemic, both at the level of principle and in a very practical way. First, it is an inherent design feature, not an afterthought that IP rights are not absolute, but maybe subordinated to the public interest can be subordinated to the public interest, not only during times of public emergency, but certainly more so at such times, this [00:31:00] national governments do in principle and should in practice have considerable agency to take action.

Even within me, within the existing framework of IP rules to ensure the public has access to necessary technologies. This is implicit in the trips agreement, texts, and integral to it. And has it been mentioned was more expressive laid out in the 2001, but the coloration, which was just past the 20 20th anniversary, plus the delayed is not where the governments have the scope to take action to curb they've exclusive effective IP rights in the public interest by planning to do already.

But whether the international current international principles framing such interventions are too restrictive and should be suspended during the pandemic. The second point is that solidarity while a powerful principle and moral imperative also has a strong practice element governments, the individual company.

Can enhance the practical effect of their agency, [00:32:00] the agency they do have by working together, including through the connected and coordinated use of their domestic policy options, both within and beyond the Paris agreement. And this is a pressing interest as many governments, of course, as we've heard in the global south look to expand and diversify production from vaccines and other critical needs, we know that an individual governments effective agency in serving public health.

So public health needs can be constrained where the full political logistical regulatory or economic reasons and connected coordinated action in practice between governments will help overcome those constraints. Finally, I do hesitate because this point can be misunderstood on the frame, as it sounds like advocacy of trade as an enemy itself, when it's simply not, I'm simply mapping out some of the practicalities of a globally connected more [00:33:00] equitable response.

The trade dimension is inevitably part of the broad response. No country will achieve, uh, autonomy, uh, in, in those powerful countries, let alone those who have been marginalized, vaccine production and distribution by complex processes, integrating multiple inputs, inherently collaborative cross border in and.

And telling us with her important aspect of sharing technology, but also in enabling access to other as well. So some restrictions, uh, trade costs, delays do need attention, uh, particularly for, uh, materials, subject taxanes with short show fives alongside, but by be dimension as part of a globally integrated approach that would meet both the highest moral and ethical ideals and pragmatic work of making equity, a practical reality insurance.