Press Release

Patent exemption for Bangladesh in pharmaceuticals can help others

**LDCs Need Access to Vaccines as Global Public Good**

**Dhaka, 05 August 2021.** As Bangladesh is graduating from LDC in 2024, the country will need to comply with the World Trade Organization (WTO) mandated Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement. As LDC Bangladesh is enjoying exemption from the patent rights and conditions set by the TRIPs. After graduation from LDC, WTO should continue that exemption for Bangladesh as it will also be helpful for other LDC countries. Today speakers at a virtual workshop opined this. The virtual workshop titled Emerging Issues in Access to Treatment for Covid-19 in Bangladesh was jointly organized by Equity BD, People's Health Movement Bangladesh and the Third World Network.

The workshop was moderated by Rezaul Karim Chowdhury of EquityBD and Prathibha Sivasubramanian of TWN made the welcome speech. While and Dr. Rashid-E-Mahbub, Former Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), Rabbur Reza, Chief Operating Officer, Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd s, Ranja Sengupta of Third World Network, Sudip Chaudhuri (former Professor, Indian Institute of Management (Kolkata), and K.M. Gopakumar, Senior Researcher and Legal advisor, Third World Network, Zakir Hossain of People's Health and Ziaul Haque Mukta, Members Secretary of Center for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods also spoke at the occasion.

Dr. Rashid-E-Mahbub said, we need a global socialistic view to ensuing vaccination for all. We need vaccines on an equity basis, not on a profit base. The UN should work to lift WTO restrictions on vaccines and the Bangladesh government should also take an effective policy to ensure vaccines for all.

Rabbur Reza said, pharma industry is a success story for Bangladesh and it has proven its resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are preparing ourselves to face the future challenges, to be in the forefront of the global generic pharma market. We are also focusing on building sufficient capabilities for medical products such as modern vaccines, biotherapeutics like monoclonal antibodies, medical devices and diagnostics.

K.M. Gopakumar said, people in developing countries and LDCs need access to vaccines and other health products to survive the pandemic, which requires widespread availability of these health products. TRIPS waiver offers the policy space to do away with the IP monopoly and facilitate the scaling up or production through diversification of the manufacturing base.  Further, there is an urgent need to negotiate a smooth transition period for graduating LDCs to address concerns on matters affecting peoples' health.

Sudip Chaudhuri, former Professor, Indian Institute of Management, Kolkata said, the rise and growth of the pharmaceutical industry in Bangladesh is a great achievement. Continuation of the product patent exemption in pharmaceuticals will help not only Bangladesh but other countries as well.

Ziaul Haque Mukta said, TRIPS waiver for Bangladesh doesn’t give benefit only for Bangladesh, it is directly benefiting also developed countries along with other LDCs and developing countries as these countries can import low-cost medicines from Bangladesh. Zakir Hossain said, in terms of amount, allocation for the health sector is increasing but it still 0.95% of the total GDP, which very low. We need to invest more with ensuring proper utilization. We have seen 24% of the allocation is unutilized. To fight COVID 19 pandemic, we need to equip the Upazila level hospitals, we also need to arrange mass awareness at the village level.

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury said, in Bangladesh, we recognize the role of the private sector in the health sector of Bangladesh, but we need to ensure public investment and management dominance in this sector. medical goods for COVID 19 pandemic must be declared as global goods.

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