



Trade agreements can play an important role in facilitating the freer flow of goods and services around the world, which can promote sustainable economic growth, development, and poverty reduction. They also have implications for global and public health, particularly by promoting access to safe, affordable medicine and devices.

Trade agreements can be positive for global health by:

- **Lowering tariffs and removing barriers to market entry.**
When tariffs on health products are lowered or eliminated through trade agreements, prices are reduced, which can offer more people access to lifesaving medicines and new health tools.
- **Establishing and harmonizing regulatory standards.**
When countries share common, streamlined standards for approving new medicines, devices, and other health tools, we ensure that health products are safe and effective, and that new, innovative products are readily available, within predictable timelines.
- **Promoting trade facilitation and easier movement of goods.**
When trade agreements help build capacity of developing country customs and border procedures, they facilitate the movement of health products across borders. This is especially important for temperature-sensitive products or those with limited shelf-life.

As trade agreements become more complex—and move beyond tariff reduction and capacity building—we need to ensure that trade supports goals for global health.

In current and future trade negotiations, we encourage the United States to:

- **Balance protections for intellectual property (IP) with protections for public health and affordable access to medicines.**
While patents and other IP protections are important to help the private sector recover upfront investment in research and development, they must not unfairly limit market access for less expensive, generic products. Provisions that extend patentability and data exclusivity, promote “evergreening” of existing products, or establish lengthy, untested IP protections on emerging technologies—like biologics—have the potential to negatively impact public health and access to affordable medicine.
- **Provide flexibility and recognize the unique health, governance, and economic challenges faced by low- and middle-income countries.**
Low- and middle-income countries often do not have the physical, economic, and human capacity needed to adhere to high-standards trade and IP regulations. In addition, least developed countries often face more severe disease burdens than their developed country trading partners, making the need for affordable treatments more acute. Trade agreements should reflect disparities in economic development and have flexible, means-based criteria for graduation to higher standards and accountability.
- **Recommit to the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and the May 10th Agreement.**
The World Trade Organization Doha Declaration and US May 10th Agreement formally declared that IP protections should not prevent countries from protecting public health and promoting access to medicine. They also reaffirmed flexibilities for developing countries to gradually enforce IP protections for pharmaceuticals, including provisions around compulsory licensing of generic medications. In current and future trade negotiations, the United States should recommit to the Doha Declaration and May 10th Agreement, including promoting global health and access to affordable medicine as core US trade objectives.