

India asks WHO to drop IMPACT and set up new member-driven programme

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India has urged World Health Organisation (WHO) to replace 'WHO's involvement in the International Medical Products Anti-counterfeiting Taskforce (IMPACT) with an effective programme to address the issue of quality, safety and efficacy and to ensure that the new programme avoids conflicts of interests.'

In a proposal put up by India and Thailand ahead of the proposed discussion on counterfeiting issue during the ongoing World Health Assembly, the two countries noted that the IMPACT was not approved by any governing body of WHO and it should be replaced by evidence-based, transparent and member-driven new programme.

The proposal also urged the member States to "refrain from applying measures to enforce intellectual property rights, such as seizure of medical products in transit, that result in creating barriers to legitimate trade of generic medicines and impeding access to medical products, particularly in developing countries."

India called upon the States to strengthen national drug regulatory authorities by enhancing their capacity to ensure for all, and particularly vulnerable groups, access to safe, efficacious quality and affordable medical products. It urged WHO director-general to provide support to the countries to enhance capacity, technical knowledge and infrastructure.

The proposal urged the members to 'take measures to remove barriers to access to quality, safe, efficacious and affordable medical products, and to ensure incorporation of public health safeguards, including as reaffirmed by the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS agreement and public health, in their domestic intellectual property legislation.'

India wanted WHO head to advocate that the world body does not get involved with infringement of intellectual property rights and other measures that could potentially undermine availability of quality medicines and generic medical products. It also urged the director general to create measures to ensure that intellectual property enforcement does not inhibit access to affordable products.

The resolution by the two countries noted that the term and definition of "counterfeit" relates to infringement of intellectual property rights and "infringement of intellectual property rights is being confused with the issues of quality, safety and efficacy."