

## **India calls upon international community to dismantle trade, IP barriers to ensure flow of HIV drugs**

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India has called for proactive and collective action from the international community to dismantle trade and intellectual property right barriers and improve the availability of accessible, affordable and quality drugs for the needy and impoverished across the world.

The plea was made by Union Health Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad while addressing the high level UN meeting on HIV and AIDS at New York on June 8. "I would also like to urge the international community to work together for removing barriers in the form of Intellectual Property Rights or other means. We must ensure that all flexibilities in TRIPS must be used for better availability of affordable medicines. Therefore, we need proactive and collective action from the international community to dismantle these barriers and improve the availability of accessible, affordable and quality drugs for the needy and impoverished," he said.

"At today's critical time in our efforts to combat HIV/AIDS, it is imperative that the international community remain highly engaged. A foremost requirement is to bridge the resource gap. It is essential that the international community continues to commit funds commensurate with the requirement for containing HIV/AIDS. Besides, the international community has to dismantle barriers that obstruct universal access to treatment. A key barrier in universal access to treatment is the high cost of Anti Retro Viral medicines," the minister said.

"Pharmaceutical companies in my country have been providing high quality and affordable drugs for use not only in India but also supplying to around 200 countries. I would also like to take this opportunity to make it abundantly clear that these generic drugs are not cheap in terms of quality. It is important that considerations of commerce and profitability are not used to erect artificial barriers between life and death," he added.

The Minister called on the international community to vigorously scale up actions to provide resources in the global effort to combat HIV and AIDS. He underscored India's efforts on prevention, treatment, care and support of HIV and AIDS. He noted that India has been able to contain the epidemic with a prevalence of just 0.31%. India's focus has been on high risk groups, expanding services and improving access to Anti Retroviral Therapy. He highlighted the active role of pharmaceutical companies from India in providing high quality affordable generic drugs all over the world and noted that these drugs are not cheap in quality, according to an official release here.