

**Geneva Trade & Development Forum: Inclusive Globalization**

**Trade and Intellectual Property**

Update: 26.06.08

**“Bridging the Technological Divide: How can LDCs Promote Innovation and Growth”**

The Trade and Intellectual Property (IP) Group addressed the following theme: “Bridging the Technological Divide: How can LDCs Promote Innovation and Growth.”

The Group’s objective was to consider how poor countries could benefit more significantly from the opportunities offered by the global knowledge economy in order to promote innovation and create a sound technological base, including through a greater use of IP regimes which were in line with their development objectives as well as of flexibilities contained in global IP rules.

In realising this objective, the Trade and IP Group was to prepare general recommendations as well as a national action plan to be submitted to the 2008 GTDF at Crans-Montana. These would identify practical measures to be implemented by governments, the private sector, international organizations and civil society. Building on previous and current work by ICTSD, SAANA Consulting and UNCTAD, Uganda was selected for the preparation of a national action plan.

The Group met physically on two occasions, at the ICTSD premises, and interacted in a continuous way since its establishment, to discuss suggestions and ideas put forward by the members of the Group.

At the first meeting on 7 December 2007, Elizabeth Tamale from the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry of Uganda and the vice-shepherd of the Group, presented her country’s experience in relation to the intellectual property technical assistance and financial cooperation needs assessment exercise carried out in her country in 2007.<sup>1</sup> The assessment was aimed at identifying the technical assistance needs in the process of adjusting to the TRIPS Agreement and building local creative and innovative capacity.

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<sup>1</sup> Sierra Leone and Uganda both submitted a communication to the WTO TRIPS Council. These communications are based on a technical assistance needs assessment exercise carried out by Saana Consulting and ICTSD. See our integrated webpage on LDC technical assistance for the full reports: <http://www.iprsonline.org/ictsd/LDCneeds.htm>

Prof. Dominic Foray, from Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, made a presentation based on a recently commissioned research for ICTSD on “Technology transfer in the TRIPS age: the need of new types of partnerships between the least developed and most advanced economies.” Prof. Foray emphasized that public private partnerships (PPPs), which had made a useful contribution in the area of public health in recent years, could also play a greater role in enhancing technology transfer to LDCs.

At the second meeting of the Group on 25th April 2008, Prof. Foray presented an updated version of his paper based on comments and feedback from the Group’s members. Elizabeth Tamale from the Ministry of Tourism, Trade and Industry of Uganda and Tom Pengelly, Saana Consulting, shared their experiences in identifying specific projects for funding by the donor community as a follow up to the IP needs assessment carried out in 2007. Christoph Spennemann from UNCTAD presented the UNCTAD project on development dimension of intellectual property (DDIP) in relation to Uganda which aimed at ensuring that the country’s IP laws are supportive of its development objectives, in particular in relation to access to medicines, access to knowledge and transfer of technology.

Presentations were followed by discussions with the ultimate aim of formulating recommendations for the Crans Montana Conference. Based on the presentations the group addressed, amongst others, the following questions:

- What components are essential to an environment conducive to innovation and competitiveness in poor countries?
- What measures can poor countries take to promote innovation and technological development?
- How can international cooperation in the area of technology transfer for poor countries be improved?
- How can poor countries make a greater use of IP regimes which are in line with their development objectives including the flexibilities of the global IP rules?

The results the Group’s discussions are reflected in a document which is currently being circulated among Group members for comments and finalisation. The document will contain general recommendations, as well as a national action plan for Uganda, to be submitted to the Crans-Montana Conference scheduled for September 2008.