

Annex 12. APEC Seminar on Trade in Services: Highlights of Day 1 (February 9, 2010)



APEC Seminar on Trade in Health Services: Highlights of Day 1 (February 9, 2010)

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Topics

- Frameworks (Ms. Karin Timmermans, WHO)
 - General Agreement on Trade in Services
 - Trade in Health Policy Took Kit
- Linkages (Prof. Amir Mahmood)
- Trade facilitation (Prof Mahmood, Dr. Loke Wan Chiong, Mr. Ruy Moreno)
 - Cross-border Tele-health
 - International Medical Travel

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Critical Issues and Challenges

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Frameworks

- Complexity of GATS and toolkit (framework not self-explanatory)
- Lack of capacity to understand and assess:
 - Trade-offs between efficiency and equity
 - Benefits from trade as an exchange process and not as profit vs loss process
 - Impact of trade liberalization on public health
 - Separability of issues in trade in health-related goods and services (diagnostic tool) while at the same time recognizing interdependence
- Measurement issues (i.e. definition of terms, data limitations, indicators to be used)
 - For example, cost competitiveness data may not be comparable
 - Comparative advantage (national level competitiveness) is different from competitive advantage (facility level)
- Lack of safety nets to address issues on ethics, equity and standards

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Linkages

- Modes are not "perfect substitutes" for one another... second-best outcomes are conceivable
 - Medical tourism will not completely solve massive migration of health professionals
- Important to identify and develop the channels through which the key mode enhances trade via other modes
 - ICT policies in aid of tele-health development
 - Air transport and immigration policies to support mobility of international medical travel
- Maximise cross-sectoral positive externalities and minimise the negative ones
 - Foreign investments in healthcare facilities lead to technology transfer, higher standards, better skills, better image and reputation
 - These effects then translate to increased income streams from international medical travel, tele-health exports

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Trade Facilitation

- Lack of capacity to handle liabilities and risks
- Issues with standards (e.g ethics, quality, accreditation)
 - Lack of resources to develop, improve and monitor and regulate standards
 - Lack of mutual recognition of standards and resources to comply with agreed standards
- Lack of region-wide mechanism to facilitate portability

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Challenges for APEC

- Capacity-building among public health ministries
- Greater interaction between public health and trade sector especially in implementing the diagnostic tool
- Development and mutual recognition of standards
- Development of complementary policies in aid of maximizing benefits from positive linkages among modes of trade

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Thank You!

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