

38th Session of the UNIDO Industrial Development Board
Statement of the Italian Head of Delegation
Ambassador Gianni Ghisi on item 8

Mr Chairman,

At the outset let me reiterate to you and to all the members of your Bureau the full support of the Italian Delegation. I am sure that under your able leadership the Board will reach fruitful conclusions.

I wish to thank the Director General for his report on "UNIDO support in fostering local pharmaceutical industry in developing countries, with special regards to essential health products" contained in document IDB. 38/15, that Italy has received with interest. I wish also to thank him for having organized a high level side event on the same issue, that we found very useful and stimulating.

Indeed, Mr. Chairman, access to high quality essential drugs is critical for making progress towards the health related MDG's (3, 4, 6 and 8 e). And this is true, both with regard to the pandemic diseases and to the non-communicable diseases, that have become the first cause of mortality also in the Developing Countries. Italy appreciates therefore the report assumption that "Under the right circumstances local production of drugs in developing countries has a valuable role to play" to promote the access for all to essential drugs.

Italy has welcomed the gradual involvement of UNIDO in fostering the pharmaceutical industry in Developing Countries by providing advisory and capacity building support. In the field, we have followed with interest and attention the activities mentioned in the Director General report, particularly those conducted in Africa. A concrete sign of the Italian support is the recent decision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to fund with a voluntary contribution of 900,000 Euro the UNIDO programme for the production of essential generic drugs in South Africa, in the framework of HIV-AIDS response and in connection with applied research activity the Italian Institute of Public Health (ISS) is conducting on a specific vaccine to combat this plague.

Mr. Chairman,

we note that the Director General report is duly stressing the quality standards that the health products should have also in the poorest countries, and it stresses also the fact that "the access-to-drug is further aggravated by

stock-outs and a significant penetration of counterfeit drugs". Italy is firmly convinced that counterfeiting of drugs is not only a crime against property rights and economic interest of Developing Countries, but also a serious crime against the fundamental right to health, as testified by a side event of the Conference of Parties to the UNTOC Convention on "Counterfeiting as an emerging transnational crime", organised by Italy one month ago in this building. We are convinced that a more effective International cooperation to fight this heinous crime is certainly necessary, but also that stimulating the local manufacturing of quality health products, at affordable prices for everyone, could largely reduce the market penetration of counterfeits.

Mr Chairman, to conclude I wish to express the Italian support to the idea, emerging from the Director General report that UNIDO take stock of the experience gained since 2006 in the field of pharmaceutical production, translating these activities into an enhanced programme. We recognise that UNIDO advisory and capacity building support in strengthening local production of essential drugs is in line with the Organization's established three thematic priorities (poverty reduction through productive activities, trade capacity-building, energy and environment) and we encourage therefore UNIDO to mobilise additional funding, including from the private sector, to enhance its contribution to the pharmaceutical industry in the developing countries. We encourage also UNIDO to subsume into the enhanced programme ongoing activities as mentioned in paragraph 38 of the report. In this respect, while appreciating the inclusion of the work of UNIDO/ICS (International Center for Science and High Technology) in Trieste, with special reference to the computer aided drug design, Italy would like to see in the list of potential partners ICGEB (the International Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnologies, also based in Trieste), taking into account the cooperation agreement linking the Center to UNIDO and the ongoing activities on Bio-pharmaceuticals and research for the production of vaccines. A third pillar on which the enhanced programme for the pharmaceutical industry could be built is a synergetic approach on the investment promotion and trade capacity building side: Italy would definitely encourage this approach.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman