

## 5<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2020 - WORLD COMPETITION DAY

### 11<sup>TH</sup> CALL FROM CUTS INTERNATIONAL

#### THEME: COMPETITION POLICY AND ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

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### World Competition Day

On December 5, 1980 the United Nations Conference approved the United Nations Set of Multilaterally Agreed Equitable Principles and Rules for the Control of Restrictive Business Practices thus marking a milestone in the history of Competition Law and Policy. CUTS International requests all stakeholders (such as, national governments, competition agencies, civil society organisations, academia, media etc.) to extend their support to its annual endeavor of observing December 5 as the World Competition Day (WCD).

We are entering into the **11<sup>th</sup> year** of this journey and are grateful to have received support from several stakeholders on our path.

The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has shaken the whole world. People are eagerly waiting for effective vaccine and proven cure for the disease. Both 'innovation' in and 'access' to healthcare (including pharmaceuticals) is crucial for the survival of the human kind. Thus, the pandemic has brought healthcare as top policy priority. Competition policy is also responding to this health crisis, on present and future competition concerns. Accordingly, the theme selected for this year – Competition Policy and Access to Healthcare – is apt and timely since it has interface with both 'innovation' and 'access'.

### Competition Policy and Access to Healthcare

Healthcare being the top public policy priority world over during the pandemic, public health interests prevailed over national economic interests when wide scale lockdowns were announced. The pandemic has also triggered policy thinking towards self-sufficiency in healthcare, including having domestic base for local production of pharmaceuticals.

Like many other policy tools, competition policy also responded to the extraordinary situation

created due to pandemic lockdowns. In general, the responses are/ were two-prong – one for smooth supply of essential items like healthcare and food items, and the other with respect to post-lockdown economic recovery. More so, healthcare now features as one of the top priorities of competition agencies.

It is widely believed that the *ex ante* competition policy (pro-competition government policies, including industrial policy) and then *ex post* competition law enforcement can be used as tools to enhance access to healthcare, which is largely dependent on its 'availability' and 'affordability'. Competition advocacy can also be an effective tool.

Therefore, on this year's WCD, it becomes pertinent to deliberate on how best competition policy and law tools can be used to enhance access to healthcare, a key component of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of 'Good Health and Well-being,' taking into account other SDGs, such as 'No Poverty', 'Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure' and 'Partnership for the Goals'.

### How can you contribute?

CUTS International suggests few tools or methods, which could be adopted for celebrating the WCD. These comprise: organising webinars; preparing advocacy materials like pamphlets and posters; publishing newspaper articles and press releases; and undertaking social media campaigns etc.

Alternatively, countries and competition authorities are free to choose their own themes and modes to celebrate WCD. The goal is to spread awareness among citizens regarding the benefits of a competitive market structure and the harmful effects of anticompetitive practices both at a national and international level.

CUTS would appreciate if you could intimate us of your respective activities on this occasion.