

# **WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION**

RESTRICTED

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## **Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights**

### **COMMUNICATION FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE JOINT UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS ("UNAIDS")**

The following communication, dated 5 June 2001, has been received from the Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS ("UNAIDS").

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In furthering our work in the area of trade and intellectual property policies and access to HIV-related commodities, I am writing to you to request that the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) be granted observer status at the World Trade Organization TRIPS Council meeting on health scheduled for 20 June 2001 in Geneva.

In recent years, the UNAIDS secretariat has been collaborating increasingly with its co-sponsors and other international organizations to identify ways in which trade and intellectual property laws and agreements could play a supportive role in our efforts to improve access to HIV and AIDS medicines. In this regard, the UNAIDS secretariat was an observer and participated in the WTO Ministerial Conference held in Seattle, USA, 30 November – 3 December 1999. In addition, I was very pleased to have participated personally in the Workshop on Differential Pricing and Financing of Essential Drugs sponsored by the WTO and WHO and held in Norway in April of this year. The collaboration between the WTO and UNAIDS has included WTO participation as a member of the Inter-agency Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS. WTO also made an important contribution to the UN System Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS.

UNAIDS attendance as an official observer at the TRIPS Council meeting on health on 20 June would provide an opportunity for UNAIDS to serve as a resource for the TRIPS Council and its Member States in providing information on the AIDS epidemic, problems regarding access to medicines for people infected by the virus, and the importance of trade and intellectual property policies and agreements to access to HIV-related commodities.

We look forward to continuing our collaboration with the WTO, and hope to follow the discussions at the TRIPS Council meeting on health which are of direct interest to us.

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