



TRADE AND HEALTH: PROMOTING EQUITY, INNOVATION, AND RESILIENCE IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

28-29 October 2025

Movenpick BDMS Wellness Resort, Bangkok, Thailand



Background and Rationale

Background

The International Trade and Health (ITH) Conference has been organized annually since 2014 by the National Commission on International Trade and Health Studies (NCITHS) together with the International Trade and Health Programme (ITH) and partners. The conference provides a platform for knowledge sharing, networking, capacity building, and policy recommendations. The outcomes of the conference have been provided to relevant agencies as input for policy decisions and their relevant work.

Rationale for ITH Conference 2025

Global Situation

- The world is undergoing major transformations driven by geopolitical tensions among major trading powers, climate-related trade barriers, and the increasing use of technology and data in health and commerce. Additional geopolitical situations and global uncertainties in 2025 may lead to more global divide and fragmentation.
- Moreover, the current global landscape is increasingly shaped by competition between major powers and the widening divide between economic blocs. These developments can lead to fragmentation of the global trade systems and restrict access to essential health goods and services.
- Disruptions in global supply chains and evolving trade rules (e.g., digital trade, carbon border measures) have significant implications for health service access, affordability of medical goods, and cross-border health workforce mobility.
- In addition, shifting demographics, including aging populations, growing urbanization, and labor migration, are also key factors exerting pressure on health systems and trade dynamics.
- At the same time, innovation in digital health, artificial intelligence (AI), and health service delivery models create new opportunities to strengthen health systems and cross-border collaboration.

International trade and health

- The reciprocal relationship between trade and health is crucial. Trade can increase the fiscal capacity for investment in health systems and technologies, while a healthy population enhances productivity, trade competitiveness, and economic stability.

- Given the current global situation, the health sector can contribute to improving the situation in several aspects, for instances, proactively engaging in trade negotiations to safeguard access to essential medicines and health services and strengthen supply chain resilience and reduce over-dependence on a few trade partners, advocating for trade rules that support Universal Health Coverage and public health protection, collaborating with digital and AI sectors to expand health service trade while maintaining privacy and quality, and collaborating with trade and other ministries to elevate health in the national trade strategy.
- In this context, there is an urgent need for evidence-based dialogue on how international trade and health policies can be aligned to achieve public health, economic development, and equity goals.

ITH Conference 2025

- It is therefore important to examine the complex interlinkage between geopolitical shifts and their effects on trade and health systems. The 2025 ITH Conference aims to address these pressing issues by fostering collaboration among global stakeholders. Through rigorous analysis, the conference seeks to help countries formulate strategies that will mitigate trade disruptions and improve the equitable distribution of health resources. This proactive approach is designed to prepare nations for future challenges while also harnessing technological advancements to improve health outcomes.
- Building on the momentum of the 2024 ITH Conference and the current global situation, the ITH Conference 2025 will focus on the main theme “Trade and Health: Promoting Equity, Innovation, and Resilience in a changing landscape,” aiming to address both the challenges and transformative potential at the trade and health interface.

Conference Objectives

The conference will provide a venue and opportunity for exchanging and discussing related issues, with the following objectives:

- (1) To examine the impacts of current geopolitical, economic, technological, and demographic changes on international trade and health.
- (2) To develop and strengthen international collaboration on research and capacity building on trade and health.
- (3) To develop actionable recommendations for more resilient, equitable, and health-promoting trade systems.

Expected Outcomes

- (1) Joint research and collaboration framework
- (2) Capacity building strategy
- (3) Recommendations for evidence-informed decision-making at the national, regional, and international level

Expected Participants

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| • International organizations | • Private sector |
| • Policymakers in health, trade, and related sectors | • Research institutions, academics, and think tanks |
| • Civil society organizations | |

Co-organisers

- (1) National Commission on International Trade and Health Studies (NCITHS), Thailand
- (2) CCS-EnLIGHT Program (Enhancing Leadership in Global Health Thailand), International Health Policy Program Foundation (IHPP), Thailand
- (3) World Health Organization Southeast Asia Region (WHO/SEARO)
- (4) National Health Commission Office (NHCO), Thailand
- (5) United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)
- (6) International Institute for Trade and Development (Public Organisation) (ITD), Thailand
- (7) The South Centre

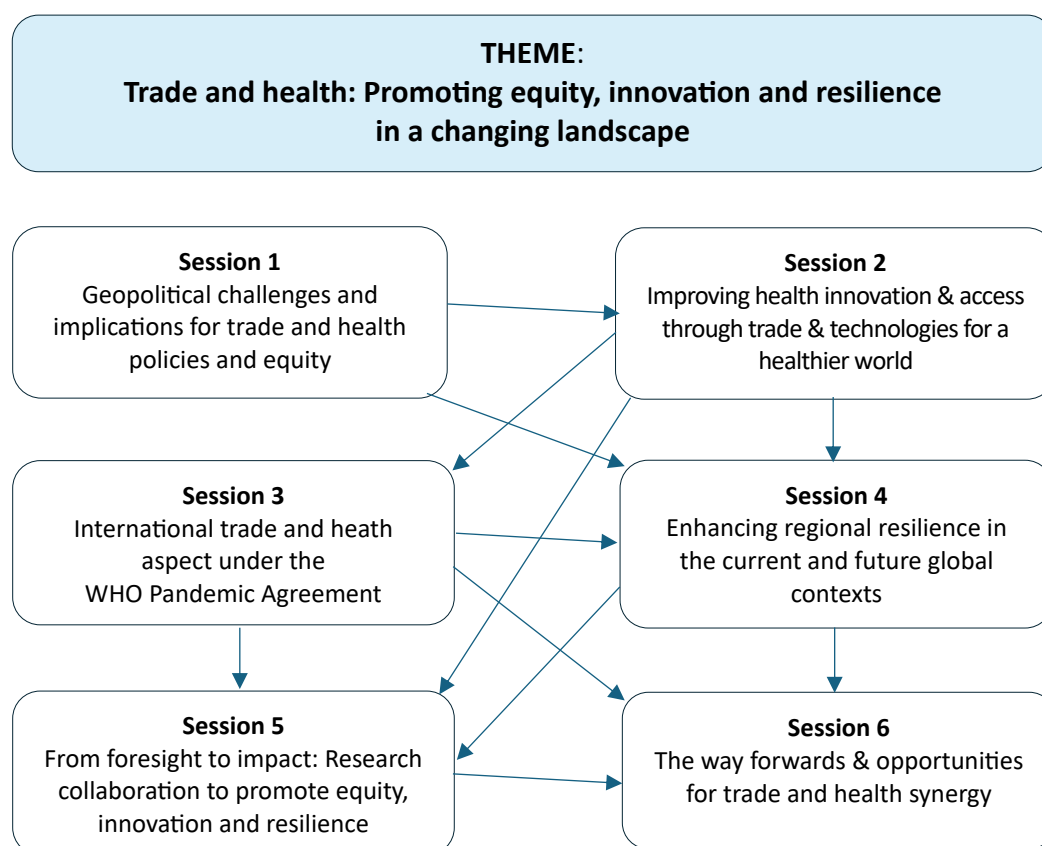
Dates and Venue

Tuesday 28 to Wednesday 29 October 2025

Mövenpick DBMS Wellness Resort, Bangkok, Thailand [and online]

Please register at <https://www.iththailand.net/public/en/events/detail/17/321> to gain access to the Conference both on-site and online.

Conference sessions



Conference Programme

Day 1 – Tuesday 28 October 2025	
08.00-09.00	Registration / Networking
09.00-09.10	Opening of the conference
	Welcome and introduction to the Conference” ❖ Cha-aim Pachanee Conference Secretariat Opening remarks: ❖ Sampan Silapanad Chair of the National Commission on International Trade and Health Studies (NCITHS), Thailand
09.10-09.30	Keynote address
20 minutes	Topic: "Fragmentation and Resilience: Navigating the Trade-Health Connection in an Era of Geopolitical Tensions" ❖ Marc Saxer Director, FES Office for Regional Cooperation in Asia, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)
09.30-10.45	Session 1: Geopolitical challenges and implications for trade and health policies and equity
75 minutes	The current geopolitical challenges greatly impact on the global trade landscape, consequently affecting health system preparedness and response. This session will discuss the consequent risks and opportunities of these challenges, covering the following issues: - Possible impacts on economic stability and international trade, and health, such as through the effect on the supply chain - The future of bilateral, regional, and multilateral cooperation under the current situation - Balancing equity between the developing and developed worlds - Opportunity for enhancing health as a driver of the economy and competitiveness Speakers: ❖ Bruno Casella (Online) Senior Economist, Investment and Enterprise Division at United Nations Conference on Trade and Development ❖ Anne-Marie Thow Professor, Public Policy and Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney, Australia ❖ Prewprae Chumrum Director, Bureau of Trade in Goods, Department of Trade Negotiations, Ministry of Commerce Thailand

	Moderator: ❖ H.E. Pimchanok Pitfield Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Thailand to the World Trade Organization and the World Intellectual Property Organization, Geneva, Switzerland
10.45-11.10	Morning coffee break and networking
11.10-12.25	Session 2: Improving Innovation and access through trade and technologies for a healthier world
75 minutes	Equitable access to quality health products and technologies remains a global challenge, especially in the face of future pandemics, non-communicable diseases, and climate-related health threats. Strengthening local production capacities, enabling effective technology transfer, and securing resilient global supply chains are critical to drive innovations and ensure that health technologies are available and accessible to all populations. This session will discuss: - Improving health products, enhancing technology transfer, and strengthening the global supply chain for a healthier population - The role of emerging technologies in promoting innovation and access to healthcare, particularly in low and middle-income countries; legal implications for AI and IP protection related to AI in the healthcare sector - The importance of innovation ecosystems, including research collaboration among innovators across multi-sectors, that are responsive to public health needs (including related issues under the WHO Pandemic Agreement to be discussed in Session 3) - Outcome of the Regional meeting for capacity building in technology transfer and public-health oriented intellectual property licensing agreements to increase access to health technologies, 19-21 November 2024, Kerala, India Speakers: ❖ German Velasquez (online) Special Advisor on Policy and Health, The South Centre, Geneva, Switzerland ❖ Viviana Muñoz-Tellez Coordinator, Health, Intellectual Property and Biodiversity Programme (HIPB), The South Center ❖ Kaarlo Castren (online) Counsellor, Intellectual Property, Government Procurement and Competition Division, World Trade Organization, Geneva, Switzerland ❖ Yongyuth Mayalarp President, Lifestyle Medicine and Wellbeing Association (TLWA) Thailand ❖ Suwit Wibulpolprasert Advisor, National Commission on International Trade and Health Studies (NCITHS), and Vice Chair of the Board, International Health Policy Program Foundation (IHPP), Thai

	Moderator: Manisha Shridhar Regional Advisor, WHO South-East Asia Regional Office, New Delhi, India
12.25-13.30	Lunch and networking
13.30-14.45	Session 3: International trade and health aspect of the WHO Pandemic Agreement
75 minutes	After more than three years of negotiation, the 78th World Health Assembly adopted the draft WHO Pandemic Agreement on 20 May 2025, and the Agreement will be open for signature after the adoption of the Annex to Article 12. Under the WHO Pandemic Agreement, there are Articles related to international trade and health, which will be discussed in this session. - Analysis of <u>trade-related elements</u> under the WHO Pandemic Agreement (the principle, the issues of concern, the ecosystems for implementation), - Countries' perspectives on implementation of the WHO Pandemic Agreement Speakers: ❖ Sukpuck Barnett Counsellor (Health, Environment, Protocol and Legal Affairs) Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations Geneva, Switzerland ❖ Aznida binti Mohamad Zaki Public Health Medicine Specialist, Disease Surveillance Sector, Disease Control Division, Ministry of Health Malaysia ❖ Manisha Shridhar Regional Advisor, WHO South-East Asia Regional Office, New Delhi, India Moderator: ❖ Inthira Suya Research and M&E Specialist, UNDP Thailand
14.45-15.10	Afternoon coffee break and networking
15.10-16.15	Session 4: Enhancing regional resilience in the current global context
65 minutes	This session will discuss: - How can countries work together to enhance regional resilience in the current and future situation? - What are the best practices/models for regional structure or regional integration? - Future regional collaborative platform

	In addition, a set of case studies from Asia and the Pacific: <i>“Regional integration and cooperation through trade and technology transfer policies to enhance affordable and equitable access to essential medical goods in Asia and the Pacific,”</i> supported by UNESCAP will be presented. The case studies focus on the experience of the pandemic that has exposed inequalities and deficiencies in access to essential medical products (vaccines, diagnostics and/or therapeutics) between and within countries in Asia and the Pacific. There is thus a need to diversify production capacity for these products and to facilitate their access in the region, including through securing essential technologies for manufacturing and utilizing regional integration and trade mechanisms. These case studies will be the basis for examining regional perspectives on access to essential medical products, covering regional and national-level needs, opportunities and developments in this area.
	Speakers: ❖ Anthony So Director, IDEA Initiative & Distinguished Professor of the Practice, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, United States of America ❖ Piti Srisangnam (online) Executive Director, ASEAN Foundation, Jakarta, Indonesia ❖ José Daniel Rengifo Martinez Office of International Affairs, The National Institute of Drug and Food Surveillance (INVIMA) Colombia ❖ Matthias Helble (online) World Health Organization Geneva, Switzerland Moderator: ❖ Yern Fai Lee Associate Economic Affairs Officer, Trade, Investment and Innovation Division, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)
16.15-16.30	Wrapping up for Day 1
	- Key issues that arose from the discussion during the day - Additional Q & A or discussion, if any By The Conference Secretariat

---see next page for Day 2 programme---

Day 2 Wednesday 29 October 2025	
09.00-09.10	Highlights of Day 1 and Introduction to Day 2 By the Conference Secretariat
09.10-10.25	Session 5: From insight to impact: Research collaboration to promote equity, innovation, and resilience
75 minutes	The Conference will identify research needs to get the right research topics. Sessions 1-4 will identify the relevant topics as a basis for the discussion. This session will serve as a starting point for collaboration in research related to issues discussed at the conference that serve countries' needs. - With the decrease in financial support for research and development, how to maintain the generation of knowledge to support decision-making in international trade and health - Strategy for collaboration among multi sectors [trade, health, civil society, private sector, academic] - Possible research topics, shared research goals, potential funding mechanisms, and cross-institutional coordination models - Possible platform for continued discussion on research after the Conference. Speakers: ❖ Nishant Jain [online] Senior Health Specialist, Human and Social Development Office, ADB Sectors Department, Asian Development Bank Manila, Philippines ❖ Anne-Marie Thow Professor, Public Policy and Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health, The University of Sydney Australia ❖ Suwit Wibulpolprasert Advisor, National Commission on International Trade and Health Studies (NCITHS), and Vice Chair of the Board, International Health Policy Program Foundation (IHPP), Thailand Moderator: ❖ Piyarat Jiarpinitnun Researcher in Veterinary Public Health Chulalongkorn University
10.25-10.45	Morning coffee break and networking

10.45-12.05	Session 6: The way forwards and opportunities for trade and health synergy
80 minutes	Taking into account the discussion in sessions 1-5 and the future scenario, this session will provide a forward-looking strategy for trade and health synergy, an enhanced role of the health sector in the economic development, institutional leadership, possible collaborative platform, and follow-up mechanisms. This session will also provide recommendations from the Conference based on the top three recommendations from each session discussed earlier. Speakers ❖ Pimchanok Pitfield Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Thailand to the World Trade Organization and the World Intellectual Property Organization, Geneva, Switzerland ❖ Darmp Sukontasap Board member, International Institute for Trade and Development (Public Organization), Bangkok, Thailand ❖ Werapong Prapha Deputy Leader, Democrat Party, Thailand Former Advisor to the Prime Minister and Thailand Trade Representative Moderator: ❖ Suwit Mangkhala Chargé d'affaires a.i. & Deputy Permanent Representative of Thailand to ASEAN Permanent Mission of Thailand to ASEAN Jakarta, Indonesia
12.05-12.20	Conference Summary
15 minutes	By the Conference Secretariat and Rapporteur Team
12.20-12.30	Conference Closing
	❖ Sampan Silapanad Chair of the National Commission on International Trade and Health Studies
12.30-14.00	Lunch and networking
14.00-16.30	Meeting of the ITH Conference Organising Subcommittee

More information at:

<https://www.iththailand.net/en/events/detail/17/321>



Documents:

<https://shorturl.at/5bpmM>

