

**DAY 1: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 09, 2017**

**Opening Session: Setting the Context- Role of Innovation for Sustainable Development**

The session comprised following speakers: Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS International; Eduardo Perez Motta, Former President, Federal Competition Commission, Mexico; Isabelle Durant, Deputy Secretary General, UNCTAD and Former Deputy Prime Minister, Belgium; and Nitin Desai, Former Under Secretary General, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations.

A pre-recorded address from the Minister of Commerce and Industry for India, Suresh Prabhu, was broadcasted during the session. He emphasised on the importance of new ideas on trade, competition, regulation and development, and praised the role of CUTS in this regard in shaping the public opinion, which was in public interest.

While delivering his remarks, Pradeep S Mehta pointed out that there is a need to strike a balance between competition and intellectual property rights (IPRs). This is especially relevant in the current scenario wherein globalisation is facing a backlash across economies.



The speakers were mostly of the opinion that there is an overlap between intellectual property and competition. There is a need to clearly determine how IPRs are issued, used and enforced. IPR regimes differ with countries given their disparate political economy scenarios. However, standards need to be defined while designing the principles, especially in case of developing nations. These countries have to deal with additional constraints such as lack of capacity, access to finance, weak infrastructure, poor research and development, and ineffective policy frameworks.

However, it was also pointed out that there is a need to change the narrative where competition holds greater significance over IPRs which are de-facto monopolies. This is because there is a lack of evidence on impact of intellectual property on productivity growth and spending on research and development. Number of patents is not necessarily a measure of innovation. Big breakthroughs in development have come through competition, drive of the innovators and not through intellectual property protection.

In his concluding remarks, Mehta pointed out the power game is at the core of these issues, which relate to conflict between mercantilism and equity. The sessions in the following days will delve deeper on these issues.