

## **ASOP Global and CSIP Participate in the First Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Workshop Focused on Illegal Online Drug Sellers**

On August 26-27, 2015, the Center for Safe Internet Pharmacies (CSIP) and the Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies (ASOP Global) facilitated dialogue in Cebu, Philippines with 19 economies from three continents on the topic of illegitimate online drug sellers.

### **OVERVIEW**

The conference included policymakers and health officials who came to learn more about global efforts aimed at educating consumers and cross-sector collaboration. Attendees discussed a resource toolkit, which was developed in draft form by the Internet Sales Working Group as part of the “Roadmap on Medical Product Quality and Supply Chain Integrity” initiative under the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Regulatory Harmonization Steering Committee (RHSC) Life Sciences Innovation Forum (LSIF). The purpose of the toolkit is to provide regulators resources, tools and lessons learned that they may draw upon and modify for use in their own economy in order to combat illegal online drug sellers.

ASOP Global and CSIP led sessions at the workshop. Libby Baney, Executive Director of ASOP Global, provided an overview of global activities targeting illegal online drug sellers. Libby also shared ASOP Global’s work, including several international research projects and a recent educational campaign targeting doctors and pharmacists.

CSIP’s Executive Director, Marjorie Clifton, led a group of experts including: Raul Cortez, Director of Legal Affairs for Microsoft, Philippines; Philippa Scarlet, Senior Counselor to the Office of the U.S. Intellectual Property Enforcement Coordinator (IPEC) within the Executive Office of the President; and Melissa Madigan, Policy and Communications Director for National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP). The panelists held a discussion titled “Unexpected Allies - Cross-Industry Partnership to Shut Down Illegal Internet Sales.” Speakers discussed the impact of voluntary initiatives in protecting consumers in the U.S. and E.U. and talked about how those and other voluntary actions should be replicated in APEC economies.

### **BACKGROUND**

APEC economies are increasingly vulnerable to the issue of fake medicines due to the following trends:

- APEC economies are often adversely impacted by the manufacture and distribution of substandard, spurious, falsified, falsely labeled or counterfeit (SSFFC) medicinal products.
- Few countries have adequate legal frameworks or policies specific to the issue of Internet sales of medicinal products.
- The confluence of numerous global trends (including increasing use of the Internet; limited access to or inconvenience of seeing a healthcare professional; rising consumer confidence in online shopping; ongoing demand for medication; and high prescription medical product costs)

foreshadow greater expansion of illegal online medicinal product sellers, exacerbating the already significant consumer safety threat.

Given these trends, CSIP and ASOP Global encouraged participants and APEC economies to utilize the *Toolkit to Combat Illegal Internet Medicinal Product Sales*, and collaborate around shared best practices to educate consumers about the threats posed by illegitimate online pharmacies.

### **HIGHLIGHTS & NEXT STEPS**

The group had successful interactions on strategies to take down illegal drug Internet websites. Important tools and actionable steps were discussed including voluntary actions by Internet commerce companies and the .pharmacy top-level domain. As such, it was suggested that industry representatives and non-governmental organizations seek further involvement of customs, law enforcement officials, and technology departments in future Internet Sales training programs.

In summary, it was agreed upon that continued research regarding Internet drug sales in APEC economies is necessary and important, and there was group consensus to continue dialogue with the Internet Sales Working Group, including a follow-up training program planned for 2016.