



**Remarks (as delivered) by
Leslie Reed, USAID Ethiopia Mission Director
African GS1 Healthcare Conference
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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

Honorable Minister of Health, **Dr. Amir Aman**

Honorable Minister of Science and Technology, **Dr. Getahun Mekuria Kuma;**

Honorable Minister of Communications and Information Technology,
Ms. Ouba Mohammed Hussein;

Honorable Head of Public Procurement and Property Administration
Agency - TBC

Representative of National Intelligence and Security Service - TBC

Regional Health Bureau Heads;

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

It is my great pleasure to be here today on behalf of USAID to participate in the opening day of the African GS1 Healthcare Conference.

I am particularly pleased that the conference is being held here in Ethiopia, where we have been working through PEPFAR, the President's Malaria Initiative, and the Global Fund to provide more than \$100 million in certified high-quality pharmaceuticals to Ethiopia each year.

One of USAID's top priorities in global health programming is to help developing countries build safe, secure, reliable, and sustainable supply chain management systems.

This enables national health systems to procure, store, and distribute pharmaceuticals more efficiently, and treat illness and disease more effectively.

As a result, people receive the care they need, when they need it, and are better able to lead healthier and more productive lives.

Why is this conference--with its emphasis on track and trace--so important? Quite simply, when a patient takes the medication that a doctor prescribes, they count on that medication to do what it is supposed to do.

With counterfeit pharmaceuticals--patients can never be sure of what they're getting.

Some counterfeit medicines might do what they're supposed to do, while others may be less effective or completely ineffective.

At worst, they can kill people. Often, governments have limited resources to combat counterfeit products from entering their national supply chain.

According to the WHO, antimalarials and antibiotics are among the most commonly reported falsified pharmaceuticals worldwide.

The WHO also estimates that 1 in 10 medical products in low- and middle-income countries is substandard or falsified.

In addition to threats to patient safety, the lack of visibility in product movement between trading partners and within organizations contributes to many inefficiencies in the pharmaceutical supply chain.

USAID is happy to support this initiative towards adopting GS1 standards in healthcare--and other industries with similar needs--to combat counterfeit and substandard medicines or products from entering into the market.

USAID is investing in systems to track and trace health commodities and products at various points of the supply chain here in Ethiopia and throughout Africa.

The key principles from GS1 standards in healthcare can also be used in many industry sectors that need to track and trace products through the entire supply chain in order to better protect the consumer.

By adopting a single global standard for product traceability, pharmaceutical regulatory bodies across the continent will be able to:

- Support product and patient safety
- Provide product information to end users and trading or traceability partners
- Enforce product authentication and anti-counterfeit policies
- Comply with regulatory requirements and guidance on health commodity recalls
- And, enhance the ability of logistics systems to ensure the availability of high-quality medicines within national health systems.

At the end of this conference, my hope is that we will all have gained a better understanding of the benefits and implications of introducing a single global standard, be able to clearly identify the challenges of adhering to cross-border policies, and convey the importance of tracking products through the supply chain.

USAID is excited about this initiative and we look forward to seeing more efforts in the coming years as we work together to create better health services--and better health outcomes--by using the GS1 standard.

I would like to thank the Ethiopian Food, Medicine and Health Care Administration and Control Authority, and the Pharmaceuticals Fund and Supply Agency for taking the lead in adopting global track and trace health care standards in Africa.

I also want to thank all of you for being here at this GS1 Healthcare Conference.

I hope you will have fruitful discussions over the next three days and identify the way forward in continuing our joint work to strengthen healthcare systems across all of Africa.

Thank you.