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MTaI calls for regulatory reforms to maximise healthcare gains from FTAs

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Roundtable highlights need for faster implementation, resilient supply chains, regulatory cooperation and skilled workforce mobility

The Medical Technology Association of India (MTaI) has called for closer alignment between India’s Free Trade Agreement (FTA) framework and domestic policies governing regulation, procurement, investment and workforce mobility to ensure that expanding trade partnerships translate into stronger healthcare outcomes and faster patient access to advanced medical technologies.

The call was made at MTaI's closed-door roundtable on 31 July, held as part of its 10th anniversary celebrations, "FTA Frameworks in an Evolving Global Order:

Shaping the Healthcare Roadmap" which brought together policymakers, diplomatic representatives from Embassies of Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Saudi Arabia, Denmark, Luxembourg, Sri-Lanka, trade experts and MedTech industry leaders.

Opening the roundtable, Pavan Choudary, Chairman, MTaI, said, "Geopolitics increasingly shapes commerce today. Trade corridors and supply chains are as important to understand as business itself. The world is not deglobalising; it is moving towards minilateralism, with regional pacts and FTAs increasingly influencing how companies will source, manufacture and invest.

The roundtable deliberated on the practical measures required to translate India's expanding FTA network into stronger healthcare outcomes and a globally competitive MedTech ecosystem. Discussions focused on ensuring that trade liberalisation is complemented by timely customs notifications, consistent product classification, simpler rules of origin, greater regulatory cooperation and more predictable implementation of trade commitments.

Deliberations also examined the alignment of trade commitments with public procurement frameworks, including the Global Tender Enquiry (GTE) mechanism, while emphasising that tariff reduction alone cannot deliver meaningful market access unless supported by clear regulatory pathways, faster product approvals and stronger coordination between regulatory authorities.

Speaking at the roundtable, Dr Gyanendra Nath Singh, Advisor to the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh and Former Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), emphasised the importance of a science-driven regulatory ecosystem that accelerates innovation while safeguarding patient interests. He said, "India has already put in place provisions for the fast-track approval of innovative medical technologies. Going forward, industry proposals must remain ethical, science-led and evidence-based. Our objective is to build an ecosystem that reduces costs, improves quality and simplifies regulatory processes, enabling India to emerge as a global hub for medical-device manufacturing and supply."

The roundtable also focused on strengthening India’s component supply chain and supporting Indian manufacturers seeking access to international markets. The discussion also highlighted the importance of greater mobility of specialised professionals, including engineers, technicians and healthcare professionals involved in the installation, servicing and clinical use of medical technologies. Participants also underscored the need for stronger cooperation on qualifications, training standards and credentialing, while noting that MTaI member companies collectively train nearly 250,000 healthcare professionals every year.

The roundtable further highlighted the need for FTAs to remain active through joint monitoring mechanisms, regulator-to-regulator engagement and dedicated platforms to resolve implementation challenges.