



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Protecting access to medicines in India and beyond

Why millions of people around the world are counting on India to protect them against harmful provision in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Trade Agreement

Hyderabad, 24 July 2017 – The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a free trade agreement that has been under negotiations since 2012, between 16 countries – including Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, and the Republic of Korea. Because of the countries it represents, it will cover nearly 50% of the world’s population - including the most vulnerable, marginalized and impoverished.

A leaked draft of the RCEP’s negotiating text on intellectual property (IP) and investment reveals proposals from Japan and South Korea that could undermine access to affordable medicines and medical innovation across the Asia Pacific region.

As the next round of RCEP negotiations start in Hyderabad today, the International Treatment Preparedness Coalition (ITPC) and its allies around the world are calling on the involved countries to drop four key provisions in the trade agreement that will increase market monopolies for pharmaceutical corporations and block access to affordable lifesaving generic medicines

“People living with HIV – many of whom rely on generic HIV drugs – have seen time and again how access to medicines is undermined when trade agreements include provisions that limit access to medicines,” cautioned Solange Baptiste, ITPC Executive Director. “ITPC welcomed the recommendations of the UN Secretary-General’s High Level Panel on Access to Medicines for countries to make full use of existing public health safeguards in trade and to reject measures beyond this. We expect RCEP countries to heed this advice, reject these provisions, and protect access to medicines for the 3.5 billion people living in RCEP countries, as well as the millions more worldwide.”

India has been a leader in making use of these public health safeguards and resisting expansion of monopolies that threaten access to affordable medicines. As a result, the Indian generics industry has been able to play a crucial role in the revolutionary scale up of HIV treatment by ministries of health around the world – particularly in low- and middle-income countries. As people living with HIV continue to lack of access to new drugs to treat coinfections, such as tuberculosis and hepatitis C, India’s ability to provide low-priced generics can save lives. This capacity, however, will be restricted if India commits to the current provisions included in the RCEP trade agreement.

“Millions of people globally are counting on India to continue to stand firm and resist dangerous provisions that represent a matter of life and death for those in need of treatment,” said Loon Gangte, Regional Coordinator of ITPC South Asia. “India has been through this before with the EU-India trade agreement where similarly harmful provisions undermining access to medicines were either withdrawn or dropped. The country needs to stand firm again!”

Editor's Notes:

This week ITPC expressed these concerns in a letter to India's Minister of Health, as well as to Indian Ambassadors in Russia, Guatemala, Kenya, Morocco, Botswana, and USA (New York, Washington D.C.).

The UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Access to Medicines' [report](#) was published in September 2016 and subsequently endorsed by then-UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon. The report makes recommendations to address the "policy incoherence between the justifiable rights of inventors, international human rights law, trade rules and public health in the context of health technologies."

About ITPC

The International Treatment Preparedness Coalition (ITPC) is a worldwide coalition of people living with HIV and community advocates working to achieve universal access to optional HIV treatment of those in need. Formed in 2003 by a group of 125 HIV activists from 65 countries at a meeting in Cape Town, South Africa, ITPC actively advocates for treatment access in eight regions across the globe. ITPC believes that the fight for HIV treatment remains one of the most significant global social justice issues.

Website: www.itpcglobal.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/itpcglobal

Twitter: www.twitter.com/itpcglobal

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/itpcglobal>

Loon Gangte, Regional Coordinator
ITPC South Asia
tuckchapa@gmail.com

Trisa Taro, Program Impact Manager
International Treatment Preparedness Coalition
ttaro@itpcglobal.com