

56 Non-profit Organisations Question US State Department Pressure Against Global Access to Medicines Initiatives - Letter to US Secretary of State, John Kerry

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The Honorable Secretary of State John F. Kerry
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We are writing to express our concern about recent statements made by representatives of the State Department on issues regarding intellectual property (IP) and access to medicines in various settings, including proceedings in Colombia, several important United Nations fora, and in India.

Colombia & Cancer Treatments

In May 2016, leaked memos from the Colombian Embassy suggested that the United States Trade Representative and others in the United States government and Congress have pressured the government of Colombia not to increase affordable access to imatinib, a leukemia drug marketed by Swiss company Novartis under the brand names Gleevec or Glivec. The drug has generated over \$47 billion in global sales for Novartis and already faces generic competition in the United States. The Novartis price for the drug in Colombia per patient is approximately twice the Colombian gross national income (GNI) per capita.

The government of Colombia has been asked by Colombian civil society organizations to issue a compulsory license on the patents, in compliance with the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), in order to remove barriers to generic competition and to foster affordable access to this lifesaving drug. The Colombian Embassy was sufficiently alarmed by the pressure from the United States to twice remark that it was concerned that proceeding with the compulsory license would put at risk the \$450 million committed for President Obama's initiative to support the Colombian peace process, *Paz Colombia*.

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