

Health Action International Opposes European Parliament's ISDS Compromise in TTIP

Members fail to safeguard access to safe and affordable medicines in the EU

AMSTERDAM—Health Action International criticised the European Parliament today for failing to adopt amendments that would protect access to safe and affordable medicines for European Union citizens in the plenary vote on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) resolution.

Members voted to replace investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) with another unspecified mechanism.

ISDS or something similar would enable American pharmaceutical companies to directly sue member state governments in private trade tribunals if they feel that a government's actions to improve access to safe and affordable medicines would diminish future returns on their investments.

"Parliament has ignored clear calls by civil society and academics to flatly reject ISDS in all forms," said Tessel Mellema. "Slapping a new name on ISDS won't change the harmful impact that it could have on access to medicines in the European Union. Further rights for investors are not needed because welldeveloped legal systems already exist on both side of the Atlantic."

Members of the European Parliament also failed to adopt amendments that would have provided a clear mandate to the Commission to not include anything in TTIP that could:

- Result in longer monopoly protection periods and higher monopoly prices for medicines for a longer period of time.
- Limit important gains recently made in the European Union on public access to clinical trial data.
- Increase the pharmaceutical industry's role in member states' policies on medicines pricing and reimbursement.

"At a time when healthcare budgets across the European Union are under strain and patients are going without needed, but available, treatments, it's frustrating that the European Parliament missed a clear opportunity to instruct the Commission not to take measures to protect access to medicines," said Mellema.

Final text of the resolution, which is non-binding, will now be sent to the European Commission.

Approximately 2.5 million people around the world do not have regular access to affordable medicines. The need is growing in many European Union countries, particularly Greece, Spain and Portugal.

Health Action International (HAI) is an independent, global network that is committed to increasing access to needed medicines and improving their rational use through research and advocacy.

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