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THE MEDICINES PATENT POOL: A POWERFUL STRATEGY FOR “GETTING TO ZERO”

On World AIDS Day, investors call on pharmaceutical companies to do their part to end the AIDS epidemic by joining the patent pool.

New York, N.Y. – Wednesday, November 30, 2011 – In honor of World AIDS Day and the United Nation’s theme, “Getting to Zero”, members of the [Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility](#) (ICCR) reiterate their endorsement of the [Medicines Patent Pool](#) (MPP) created by UNITAID, and call upon pharmaceutical companies to share their licenses for life-savings AIDS medicines.

“The ‘Getting to Zero’ theme has three main goals,” said Christina Herman of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate: “Zero new infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths: The MPP is an effective and powerful strategy against all three. As investors in pharmaceutical companies who view access to medicines as a fundamental human right, we strongly encourage participation.”

According to the MPP website, “With the patent pool model, multiple patents are ‘pooled’ and licensed out by one entity, in order to cut down on transaction costs for all parties involved. In the case of medicines, this allows more affordable and more adapted versions of patented drugs to be produced as generics, long before their 20-year patent terms run out.”

According to Cathy Rowan of Trinity Health, ***“When I was a lay missionary in Brazil 20 years ago, ministering to people with AIDS meant accompanying them to their deaths. Today’s medicines reduce the number of deaths and hospitalizations due to AIDS and have given millions new opportunities for their lives. It is incumbent on pharmaceutical companies to do everything within their power to make these medicines more affordable and more widely available.”***

For over 10 years, through shareholder actions and in corporate dialogues, ICCR members have been engaging pharmaceutical companies to improve global access and affordability of medicines for the world’s most vulnerable populations. ICCR has convened two [roundtables on access to medicines](#), the most recent on the MPP, which included representatives from the World Health Organization, the Obama administration, NGOs, global pharmaceutical companies and investor groups to encourage the sharing of life-saving AIDS medicines’ patents.

The U.S. National Institutes for Health was the first organization to join the MPP last year sharing its license for the HIV medication darunavir. Since then several generics companies have joined the pool, and in July of this year, Gilead Sciences became the first branded pharmaceutical company to formally join the MPP.

Said Sr. Judy Byron, Director of the Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment, ***“We want to once again applaud Gilead Sciences for being the first pharmaceutical company to join the MPP. While the agreement has come under some scrutiny, we believe it is an important first step and commend them for showing leadership.”***

The investors point to the Indian generic company Aurobindo’s recent entry into the MPP as a clear sign of progress and MPP representatives report that several pharmaceuticals are currently in formal negotiations, including Bristol Myers Squibb and ViiV.

Underscoring the urgency, Sr. Barbara Aires of the Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth said, ***“Thirty years after it was first diagnosed, millions of people in developing countries are still sick and dying of AIDS. The need for affordable medicines to eradicate this scourge couldn’t be clearer. We want to encourage ViiV and BMS to achieve a successful conclusion to their negotiations and once again call upon the other companies we hold, such as J&J, Merck and Abbott, to begin negotiating with the MPP immediately.”***

Said Pat Zerega of Mercy Investment Services, ***“It is our fervent hope that by World AIDS Day 2012, all pharmaceutical companies will have seen the wisdom of joining the MPP. The MPP is one of the most effective strategies we have to help us ‘Get to Zero’.”***

Contact:

Susana McDermott

Director of Communications, ICCR

212-870-2938

smcdermott@iccr.org

[About the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility \(ICCR\):](#)

Currently celebrating its 40th year, ICCR is the pioneer coalition of active shareholders who view the management of their investments as a catalyst for change. Its 300 member organizations with over \$100 billion in AUM have an enduring record of corporate engagement that has demonstrated influence on policies promoting justice and sustainability in the world.

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