



Cc:

Commissioner Dalli (SANCO)
Commissioner Piebalgs (DEV)
Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn (R&D)
INTA Committee, European Parliament
DEV Committee, European Parliament
European Parliament Working Group on Innovation, Access to Medicines and Poverty-Related Diseases

11 January, 2010

Dear Commissioner De Gucht,

Congratulations on your new appointment, which we hope signals a concerted effort by the European Commission to ensure that the European Union trade and development agendas are mutually supportive of improving access to health care and medicines in developing countries.

Oxfam, Médecins Sans Frontières and Health Action International have been working for decades to improve access to medicines in developing countries. We have already discussed with your colleagues at DG Trade and DG Development about the EC commitment to support access to medicines as part of the EC development and trade agendas. Most recently, Baroness Ashton requested a meeting with Oxfam following the publication of a joint HAI and Oxfam briefing paper titled "Trading Away Access to Medicines" in October 2009.¹

We are very concerned about actions by DG Trade that appear to contradict the EU's broader commitment on access to medicines. Existing EU trade policies will undermine access. Among our concerns are: the European Free Trade Agreements with developing countries, the EU intellectual property enforcement agenda, and EU pressure on developing countries to refrain from using the TRIPS flexibilities.

Oxfam, MSF and HAI would like to present a declaration on the role of EU in access to medicines, detailing our specific concerns and making recommendations to limit the negative impact on access to medicines in developing countries.

The declaration has been signed by numerous civil society organisations and academic institutions round the world, representing both the north and the south. We urge you to strive to make DG Trade policy compatible with these recommendations.

Finally, let us congratulate you again on your appointment, and we wish you a successful tenure.

Yours sincerely,

Jeremy Hobbs, Executive Director, Oxfam
Dr. Tido von Schoen-Angerer, Director of Campaign for Essential Medicines, MSF
Dr. Tim Reed, Director, Health Action International

¹ Trading Away Access to Medicines. How the European Union's trade agenda has taken a wrong turn. October 2009. <http://www.haiweb.org/20102009/OxfamHAIReportTradingAwayAccessToMedicines.pdf>