

## **EU blamed for breaking Doha Declaration denying access to cheaper medicines to poor nations**

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**Joseph Alexander, New Delhi**

Alleging that the European Union's trade agenda has taken a wrong turn and charging the EU with breaking its commitment under the Doha Declaration on TRIPS, three leading international organizations have sought corrections in the existing policies and a new approach towards the issue.

In a joint declaration by Oxfam, Health Action International (Europe) and Médecins Sans Frontières have claimed that the EU's approach to intellectual property and innovation policies were affecting the developing countries and negatively impacting access to medicines. Unless real reforms are not instituted, it will cause serious harm over the long-term to public health, they warned.

The joint declaration comes on the occasion of eighth anniversary of the joint Doha declaration on TRIPS and public health. "Under the Doha Declaration, all countries committed to ensure that public health must be prioritized over trade interests. Our three organizations are deeply disappointed that the EU is breaking this commitment, while also failing to honour its obligations under the Millennium Development Goals," the declaration said. The organizations also launched a signature campaign to support its petition, being planned to be submitted to European Commission in December.

"European Union trade policies consistently threaten access to affordable essential medicines by seeking to entrench overreaching intellectual property (IP) rules. The EU has also failed to commit sufficient resources towards promoting medical innovation that meets the needs of people in developing countries. Moreover, it has not dedicated financial or political support to new models of innovation that aim to overcome the deficiencies of the patent system and encourage innovation and access to medicines where they are most needed," the declaration said.

"If the current EU trade policy remains, it will have a disastrous impact on the lives of millions of people in developing countries. For example the Indian generic medicines industry, which exports two-thirds of its production to developing countries, could face severe restrictions. These restrictions will deny affordable medicines to millions of people in both India and India's developing country trading partners," it said.

The European Commission and EU Member States should honour commitments under the MDGs, the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health, and relevant World Health Assembly (WHA) resolutions on innovation and access to medicines, including full implementation of the WHO 'Global Strategy and Plan of Action'. The European Commission should stop exerting pressure on governments that attempt to introduce safeguards and flexibilities to protect and promote public health. The European Union

should amend its customs regulation EC 1383/2003 of 22nd July 2003 to ensure that it does not have a detrimental impact on developing countries, by excluding border measures for violations of pharmaceutical patents, especially for medicines in transit. The EU should ensure that the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) does not set higher IP standards that might impede access to medicines in developing countries. Therefore, the EU should ensure that patents are excluded from any agreed framework, according to the petition.