

Global Fund calls for clauses in FTA to ensure access to medicines for AIDS, malaria, TB

Joseph Alexander, New Delhi

Monday, May 30, 2011, 08:00 Hrs [IST]

Global Fund, the leading public-private partnership in the world, has called for proposals in the ongoing trade negotiations between European Union and India to ensure that the Free Trade Agreements (FTA) allow continued access to medicines, in particular, for treatments of AIDS, TB and malaria.

“Free Trade Agreements (FTA) with the developing world need to take into account that the world’s major pandemics predominantly affecting the poorest people and should recognize the role of India in supplying quality low-cost medicines to the developing world,” said Professor Kazatchkine of the Global Fund, after the recent meeting in Geneva.

Ninety-two per cent of anti retroviral drugs delivered through Global Fund grants in 2010 were produced in India, said the agency which is the main financier of programmes to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, with approved funding of US\$ 21.7 billion. To date, programmes supported by the Global Fund have saved 6.5 million lives through providing AIDS treatment for 3 million people, anti-tuberculosis treatment for 7.7 million people and the distribution of 160 million insecticide-treated nets for the prevention of malaria.

The Global Fund Board has also endorsed a market-shaping strategy to ensure sustainability of AIDS treatment, by entering into extensive collaborations with implementers and partners. The strategy aims to optimize price, quality, design and sustainable supplies of health products.

The strategy will initially be applied to anti retroviral medicines to treat AIDS. It aims to contribute to improved health outcomes, accelerate access to superior products and achieve significant cost savings. Under the strategy, the Global Fund will also prioritize strategic market interventions to sustain paediatric anti retroviral treatment, working with UNITAID and other partners.

“This strategy and the efforts of our partners are part of an emerging vision that will help to ensure the quality and sustainability of treatment and prevention for AIDS, TB and malaria in the next decade and beyond,” said Professor Kazatchkine.

The new Global Fund strategy complements recent initiatives and statements in support of lowering drug costs and ensuring the long-term sustainability of medicines to address major global health challenges, according to a statement.

The new four-year HIV strategy is endorsed by the World Health Assembly at its Sixty-

Fourth Meeting this week and the recent report on the AIDS response by UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon. Both call for the use of measures to contain costs and foster an open, competitive market for health commodities, including the use of TRIPS flexibilities, patent pooling and voluntary licence agreements between patent holders and generic manufacturers. In addition, a recent Policy Brief by UNAIDS, WHO and UNDP on the use of flexibilities contained in the agreement on Trade-Related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)³ provides clear guidance to governments and other stakeholders seeking to expand access to anti retroviral treatment.

The Global Fund supports these measures and joins its partners in calling for negotiating parties in Free Trade Agreements with developing countries to ensure that no provision in such agreements hampers access to lower-priced quality medicines.