

PRESS STATEMENT

UNAIDS welcomes first voluntary license to the Medicines Patent Pool by a pharmaceutical company

Medicines Patent Pool sign historic agreement with Gilead Sciences to increase access to HIV medicines in developing countries

GENEVA, 12 July 2011—The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) strongly welcomes the new license agreement between the Medicines Patent Pool and the pharmaceutical company Gilead Sciences to increase access to antiretroviral therapy in developing countries. This is the first time a pharmaceutical company has signed an agreement with the Medicines Patent Pool and marks a turning point for future private sector collaboration in sharing innovation to advance the response to HIV.

Under the agreement, Gilead will share intellectual property on a range of medicines to treat HIV. The agreement will allow for the production of the HIV medicines tenofovir, emtricitabine, cobicistat, and elvitegravir as well as a combination of these products in a single pill known as the “Quad.” Cobicistat, elvitegravir and the Quad are products still in clinical development. Companies interested in producing generic versions of the medicines for developing countries will be able to approach the Patent Pool to negotiate licensing terms.

“This agreement between the Medicines Patent Pool and Gilead and signals a new era in the response to HIV with private and public sectors working hand in hand for the best interests of public health,” said Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of UNAIDS. “I hope today’s announcement will inspire other pharmaceutical companies to follow suit to share intellectual property and innovation to make new technological advances in HIV treatment available sooner to the people that need them most.”

The agreement is particularly significant and represents a major step forward as Tenofovir is one of the first-line medicines for HIV recommended for use by the World Health Organization as per guidelines released in 2010. Under the new agreement Tenofovir will also be licensed for use to treat Hepatitis B, a common and serious co-infection of HIV.

The inclusion of products still under development is a rare and important advance and will allow for generic versions of new medicines to rapidly enter the market, lessening the inequality between developed and developing countries in accessing new medicines.

In low- and middle-income countries, UNAIDS estimates that around 6.6 million people are currently accessing HIV treatment—however a further 9 million are still in need. At the recent United Nations High Level Meeting on AIDS, UN Member States unanimously adopted a declaration which set bold new targets which included increasing access to antiretroviral therapy to 15 million people by 2015.

The Medicines Patent Pool is a creative new approach which was established in 2010 with the support of UNITAID to increase access to newer antiretroviral medicines by creating a pool of patents and intelligence on antiretroviral production donated by medicine producers. It is currently in negotiations with six other patent holders.

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Contact

UNAIDS Geneva | Sophie Barton-Knott | tel. +41 22 791 1697 | bartonknotts@unaids.org

UNAIDS

UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, is an innovative United Nations partnership that leads and inspires the world in achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. Learn more at unaids.org.