

Resist putting pressure for aggressive IP policies: MSF

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On the occasion of the visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Germany, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) calls on German Chancellor Angela Merkel to refrain from pushing for harmful IP provisions in the EU-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA) which is currently under negotiation.

The EU-India FTA has been in negotiations since 2007.

From the outset, the European Commission has pushed to include provisions that would undermine India's ability to produce affordable medicines on which millions of people in developing countries rely.

It is expected that Modi and Merkel are going to talk about the reinstatement of negotiations for the controversial EU India free trade agreement.

India's leadership in producing affordable medicines is due to its patent law which applies internationally recognized legal safeguards for public health which allows generic competition to flourish, bringing down the prices of medicines for HIV, TB, and hepatitis C by over 90 percent.

Mr Philipp Frisch, coordinator, Access Campaign Germany states: "For years, the EU - blindly lobbying for their pharmaceutical industry - has pressured India to introduce harmful policies in a bid to stamp out competition from Indian generics. We urge Chancellor Angela Merkel to resist putting pressure for aggressive IP policies that will severely restrict people's access to these life-saving medicines in her talks with Prime Minister Modi."

In light of the German G7 presidency and the G7's focus on global health, it would be a fatal signal to restrict Indian generics production by demanding IP provisions going well beyond current trade rules.

These provisions would impact on access to life-saving drugs from India, having a dramatic effect on MSF's work and putting

millions of lives in the balance.

"The 'Make in India' campaign is a push by the Indian government to encourage India as a manufacturing hub. However, increased levels of intellectual property in areas such as pharmaceuticals could potentially come at the expense of undermining public health provisions and local production which have made India the 'pharmacy to the developing world' supplying affordable generic versions of life-saving medicines," says Ms Leena Menghaney, head, South-Asia, MSF Access Campaign.