



## PHARMACEUTICALS EXPORT PROMOTION COUNCIL

(Set up by Ministry of Commerce, Govt. of India)

COPY

Date : 14-05-2010

News / Story reproduced with thanks:- **Pharmabiz**

### **NGOs across world expresses concerns over WHO's association with IMPACT**

Friday, May 14, 2010 08:00 IST **Suja Nair Shirodkar, Mumbai**

Direct link to the News/Story:-

<http://www.pharmabiz.com/article/detnews.asp?articleid=55451>

Concerned over the nature and extent of World Health Organisation (WHO)'s endorsement of IMPACT, 44 public interest organisations across the world have joined hands in expressing their displeasure in an open letter to WHO. The letter addressed to Dr Margaret Chan, director general of the WHO states that WHO's should refrain from involving itself in the issue of counterfeits since it will have adverse consequences for access to affordable medicines while failing to address real problem of proliferation of pharmaceuticals with compromised quality, safety and efficacy.

It states that the WHO's involvement with IMPACT legitimises the TRIPS plus IP enforcement agenda pushed by OECD governments and businesses and undermines public health. Approach adopted by IMPACT is not proper since it fails to address the root causes for the proliferation of pharmaceuticals with compromised quality and safety in particular, the high price of pharmaceutical products. This results in inequitable access and the problem of weak regulatory capacity in developing countries in terms of facilities, financial and human resources.

It warns that if WHO will continue to get itself associated with IMPACT it will threaten to undermine WHO's credibility as an organisation that is impartial and upholds the interests of public health. It implies that the WHO Secretariat should explore use of other terminologies through member-driven process to capture the problem of pharmaceuticals with compromised quality, safety and efficacy substituting the term counterfeit which is already defined in the TRIPS Agreement.

The letter clearly expresses the NGO's dislike over WHO's close contact with IMPACT and have asked WHO to distance itself from the organisation, its activities, draft principles and elements and also to stop functioning as the Secretariat of IMPACT. The letter demands, "WHO to withdraw its logo from all IMPACT documents and ensure that it does not endorse any other activities that promotes the IP enforcement agenda."

The letter expects the WHO to reorient its programme towards addressing the real causes and solutions to pharmaceuticals with compromised quality, safety and efficacy in particular, focus its attention to dealing with high prices of pharmaceuticals, ensuring timely availability of affordable pharmaceuticals, as well as strengthening the capacity drug regulatory authorities.

At a time when millions of people still go without the medicines they need due to high prices, ongoing WHO participation in IMPACT is a major step in the wrong direction. Enabling the pharmaceutical industry to aggressively enforce intellectual property rights in developing countries does nothing to lower medicine prices or improve the quality of medicines.