

**CIVICUS WORLD ASSEMBLY
Glasgow, 21-25 June 2006**

Workshop 6

Negotiating Change and Striving for Justice: the Role of Non-Public Actors

NGOs and the Global Access to Medicines Campaign

Abstract

This paper will identify patterns in recent NGO activity in relation public health and access to medicines at the World Trade Organisation (WTO). NGO activity at the WTO has been chosen as the focus for the paper because the WTO Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (the TRIPS Agreement) was heavily criticised on grounds that it would result in higher prices for patent drugs.

In response to these criticisms, on 6 December 2006 WTO Members agreed to amend the TRIPS Agreement to assist developing countries in dealing with the problem of access to essential medicines and to address public health crises such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

A crucial factor in these developments has been the role of NGOs. The paper will examine the impact of NGO campaigning designed to raise access to medicines as an issue in the public's mind. The paper will also review the extent to which NGOs played a role in supporting developing countries during WTO negotiations, since developing countries themselves often lacked the technical expertise to negotiate effectively with developed countries on the detail of the TRIPS provisions relating to access to medicines.

The paper will report the results of interviews, undertaken by the author, with representatives of NGOs, developing country governments and the WTO in Geneva. It will outline the strategies taken by NGOs in relation to the access to medicines campaign, the value that developing countries place on the advice they receive from NGOs, and the way that NGOs are perceived by WTO officials.

The paper will examine the extent to which coalitions have emerged between 'Northern' and 'Southern' NGOs and the extent to which coalitions have emerged between NGOs and developing country governments.

The paper will also highlight current institutional arrangements for NGO participation at the WTO and will examine how the relationship between multilateral institutions and NGOs might be enhanced in the future.

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NGPA Research Project: NGOs, Intellectual Property Rights and Multilateral Institutions