

Granted regional thematic hearing on access to medicines in Latin America and the Caribbean

Press release
November 30th 2016

After more than two years of work and three formal applications, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) granted to 25 Latin American civil society organizations the first Regional Thematic Hearing on "Access to Medicines in Latin America and the Caribbean". The hearing will take place the next December 6th at 12:15 p.m. in Panama City, within the scope of the 159th Regular Session of the Commission.

This hearing will be a historical opportunity to make visible the denial of the fundamental right to health and life as the result of the lack of access to necessary and affordable medicines, as well as its causes and possible solutions. As was expressed by the recently published Report of the United Nations Secretary-General's High Level Panel on the Access to medicines, convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, this issue is "a global multidimensional problem affecting all countries".

In fact, according to WHO estimates, the problem affects more than 2 billion people worldwide and occurs virtually in all diseases, with emphasis on those that disproportionately affect low- and middle-income countries, causing the death of more than 10 million people each year, a figure not recorded by any other event in universal history, including the two world wars.

In Latin America, 125 million people lack permanent access to basic health services, registering 700,000 avoidable deaths each year.

At the hearing, the petitioning organizations will expose the causes that years of research have identified as the roots behind this drama:

- Lack of research on medical technologies capable of preventing and treating diseases that disproportionately affect low- and middle-income countries.
- High drug prices, especially for the so-called "blockbusters".
- Blockage of the supply of affordable generic drugs by large pharmaceutical multinationals and their governments through the use of legal and illegal instruments.
- Pressures from pharmaceutical corporations against laws that protect the right to health of the population.
- Failure of States to ensure that their public policies respond to their obligation to respect, protect and fulfill the human right to health.

Likewise, the petitioners will present four emblematic cases of attacks to initiatives and governmental measures that seek to guarantee access to medicines in Argentina, Brazil and Colombia.

Finally, they will leave to the IACHR its recommendations aimed at putting an end to this tragedy and expressing the hope of the peoples of the Americas and the Caribbean that the Commission endorse this cause by making available to it the instruments at its disposal, including recommendations to the governments of the Member States to adopt progressive measures to ensure the observance of the fundamental right to health and medicines.

The 25 petitioning organizations invite everyone to join them before the IACHR through social networks (#AudienciaAccesoAMedicamentos). This hearing is the opportunity to raise the voice of millions of people in the continent and in the world who cry out for the prioritization of the fundamental right to health over profit and commercial interests.

PETITIONER ORGANIZATIONS

Local organizations

1. Brazilian Interdisciplinary AIDS Association (ABIA - Brasil)
2. Medicines Information Center of the National University of Colombia (CIMUN - Colombia)
3. Colombian Commission of Jurists (CCJ - Colombia)
4. Oversight Committee for Health and Cooperation (CVCS - Colombia)
5. Conectas Human Rights (Brasil)
6. Episcopal Conference of Colombia (CEC - Colombia)
7. Colombian Medical Federation (FMC - Colombia)
8. Grupo Efecto Positivo Foundation (FGEP - Argentina)
9. Ifarma Foundation (Colombia)
10. Gestos: Seropositivity, Communication and Gender (Brasil)
11. Research group "Right and Development: Prometeo", Attached to the Unit of Social Legal Investigations (UNIJUS) of the Faculty of Law, Political and Social Sciences of the National University of Colombia. (Colombia)
12. Pela Vidada do Rio de Janeiro Group (GPV-RJ - Brazil)
13. Misión Salud Foundation (Colombia)
14. Pastoral of Aids Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)
15. Rede Jovem Rio+ (Brasil)
16. National Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS - Center Sao Luis, MA (RNP+ SLS-MA - Brazil)
17. Health and Pharmaceuticals (USA)
18. Allied Universities for Essential Medicines (UAEM - Brazil)

International and regional organizations and networks

1. LAC - Global Alliance for Access to Medicines

2. Civil Association: International Action for Health in Latin America and the Caribbean (AIS LAC - Peru)
3. Caritas Latinamerica and Caribbean
4. Latin American Episcopal Council (Department of Justice and Solidarity of CELAM) (Latin America)
5. International Treatment Preparedness Coalition Latin American and Caribbean (ITPC-LATCA)
6. Medical Missionary Sisters for Latin America
7. Latin American Network for Access to Medicines (RedLAM)