



UNITED NATIONS

Press Release

UN INDEPENDENT EXPERT LAUNCHES DRAFT HUMAN RIGHTS GUIDELINES FOR PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES

19 September 2007

The UN Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, Paul Hunt, today launched for public consultation a draft *Human Rights Guidelines for Pharmaceutical Companies in relation to Access to Medicines*.

"Almost 2 billion people lack access to essential medicines," the Special Rapporteur said. "Improving access to existing medicines could save 10 million lives each year. Access to medicines is characterised by profound global inequity as 15% of the world's population consumes over 90% of the world's pharmaceuticals", the Special Rapporteur explained.

Access to medicines is a central feature of the right to the highest attainable standard of health. States have primary responsibility for enhancing access to medicines, as set out in the expert's report to the UN General Assembly last year (13 September 2006, A/61/338). The Special Rapporteur routinely questions Governments about their national medicines policies and implementation plans.

"Pharmaceutical companies have a profound impact - both positive and negative - on Governments' ability to realise the right to the highest attainable standard of health. It is time to identify what pharmaceutical companies should do to help realize the human right to medicine. How can we expect pharmaceutical companies to respect human rights if we fail to explain what they are expected to do?" he added.

Consisting of some 50 provisions, the draft Guidelines were launched today at the University of Toronto, Canada. They are available for comment until 31 December 2007.

"The draft Guidelines are designed to help pharmaceutical companies, as well as those monitoring their activities. I look forward to finalising the Guidelines in 2008", Professor Hunt concluded.

The Special Rapporteur is an independent expert appointed by the then United Nations Commission on Human Rights to help States, and others,

promote and protect the right to the highest attainable standard of health.

The draft Guidelines, and other initiatives of the Special Rapporteur, can be found at www2.essex.ac.uk/human_rights_centre/rth/

For further information on the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and copies of his reports, please go to

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/issues/health/right/index.htm>

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