

AFTINET statement on TPP Ministerial Declaration October 27, 2014

AFTINET slams possible shameful trade-offs and calls for release of TPP text

The [Ministerial Statement](#) ^[1] claiming 'significant progress' on TPP negotiations with no details and further meeting plans shows that the Australian government may be making shameful concessions in exchange for dubious market access deals. [Recently leaked draft text](#) ^[2] shows the US still wants longer and stronger patents on medicines, more internet controls, and special rights for foreign investors to sue governments over changes to domestic laws,' Dr Patricia Ranald, Coordinator of the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network (AFTINET) said today.

It is significant that, although Australia hosted the negotiations, the meeting was chaired by the US trade representative, exerting maximum pressure for concessions to the US agenda,' added Dr Ranald.

There is growing resistance to this agenda, and to the secrecy of the negotiations, from Australian civil society, as shown not only by our network of 60 community groups, but by recent statements from organisations like MSF, (Doctors without Borders) and the Australian Medical Association. US proposals will result in extension of the current twenty-year patents on medicines, meaning even more delays in the availability of cheaper generic medicines. This will lead to increased costs to government subsidies through the PBS in Australia, and pressure for higher prices at the chemist. Trade Minister Robb has been desperately trying to discredit critics of the TPP, but these voices are too strong,' said Dr Ranald

The inclusion of Investor-State Disputes (ISDS) in the TPP would mean that US companies will be able to sue Australian governments if they allege that changes to domestic laws will 'harm' their investment. John Howard did not agree to this in the Australia-US free trade agreement, which is why the Philip Morris tobacco company had to find an obscure Hong Kong investment agreement with ISDS to sue our government over our plain packaging legislation. ISDS in the TPP would give US companies open slather to sue Australian governments, just as the US Lone Pine mining company has sued the Quebec government over environmental regulation of gas mining, and the Eli Lilly pharmaceutical company has sued Canada over a court refusal to grant a medicine patent,' said Dr Ranald.

This agenda is also being resisted by US civil society and the U.S. Congress, which has refused to give up its right to amend the TPP text if it is ever agreed. This means the US government cannot guarantee that any agreement will be passed by the U.S. Congress,' said Dr Ranald.

It is shameful that Australian policy on medicines, on copyright and the right of governments to regulate in the public interest without being sued by foreign investors could be secretly traded away behind closed doors. This is clearly not in Australia's national interest. The draft text should be released now and the full TPP text should be released before it is signed so that Australians can judge for themselves.' concluded

Dr Ranald.

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