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TPP Must Not Trade Away Free Speech and Health

Negotiators from nine countries gathering outside Washington DC to draft a new Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement must ensure that any new rules on copyright and patents adhere to core principles of transparency and uphold human rights, Amnesty International said today.

“No one has the right to trade away our hard-fought legal protections for free speech and the right to health, and much less to do it behind closed doors,” said Suzanne Nossel, executive director for Amnesty International USA.

“It is time for TPP negotiators to show the public their cards and, more importantly, the draft text of the agreement.”

This text has been kept a secret since negotiations began in 2007, but leaked information suggests that it would attempt to achieve some of the same objectives of the widely criticized Anti-Counterfeiting Agreement (ACTA).

Specifically, leaked TPP draft text neglects protections for fair use and standard judicial guarantees – such as the presumption of innocence - and includes copyright provisions that could compromise free speech on the internet and access to educational materials.

Moreover, draft TPP provisions related to patents for pharmaceuticals risk stifling the development and production of generic medicines, by strengthening and deepening monopoly protections.

“Access to life-saving medicines is a right, not a privilege, and the TPP must put people ahead of profits,” Nossel said.

In 2007, negotiations on the Trans-Pacific Partnership started between Chile, New Zealand, and Singapore. The United States joined the negotiations in 2008, with Canada and Mexico expected to join negotiations soon.

The TPP countries account for 27 per cent of global Gross Domestic Product.

The talks that start today in Leesburg, Virginia, hosted by the United States Trade Representative, are the 14th round of negotiations.