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GROUPS CALL FOR EFFECTIVE LAW ON ACCESS TO MEDICINES FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

OTTAWA, October 21, 2009 — Two leading NGOs are making the case before Parliamentarians that Canada's Access to Medicines Regime (CAMR) must be changed.

The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network and Médecins Sans Frontières / Doctors Without Borders (MSF) are among the witnesses appearing today before the Senate's Standing Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce, along with other organizations, to speak to Bill S-232. This proposed legislation would streamline CAMR, which should be facilitating access to affordable medicines for AIDS and other diseases to developing countries but has so far delivered little — a single shipment to only one country in over five years.

The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network will outline how Bill S-232 aims to streamline the current law to make it more user-friendly and effective in a manner consistent with Canada's international legal obligations. MSF will outline the difficulties it faced in trying, without success, to use CAMR to help patients it is treating.

"While some opponents have raised red herrings about S-232 not being WTO-compliant, the truth is that the proposed fixes to CAMR are a 'win-win-win-win' situation," says **Richard Elliott**, Executive Director, Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network. "It's a win for patients in the developing world who need medicines, a win for Canadian generic companies that can supply those medicines, a win for brand-name companies that would get royalties on the additional sales of generic medicines in those countries, and finally, it's a win for Canada's international reputation as a concerned humanitarian country in the world — all at no cost to Canadian taxpayers."

"CAMR has failed to provide the expeditious solution it was expected to deliver," says **Rachel Kiddell-Monroe**, an advisor to MSF's Access to Essential Medicines Campaign. "MSF urgently needs to get more affordable medicines to treat patients in the countries where we work. But the World Trade Organization's August 30th Decision is preventing this from happening and Canada's legislation perpetuates the barriers that this international decision created. Canada claims to be a leader in access to medicines issues and the government should act on urgently needed reforms both here in Canada and internationally."

Over 43 organizations have been advocating for changes that would increase access to affordable medicines by people in developing countries, including AIDS organizations, international development and humanitarian organizations, student groups, medical groups and other civil society groups. For the full list of groups and further background information, please see www.aidslaw.ca/camr.

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