

## 100413 UNITAID Patent Pool Budget Approved

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On the 13<sup>th</sup> April 2010, board members of international drug purchasing mechanism UNITAID approved a 2010 budget for a pioneering patent pool initiative.

The Finance and Administration Committee of UNITAID decided to budget approximately \$3.9 million for the creation of the patent pool, a UNITAID spokesperson told Intellectual Property Watch. This decision means that implementation of the project – a plan for which was approved in December – may now begin in earnest.

At a UNITAID board meeting in December, a sum of “up to \$4 million for the setting up of the patent pool in 2010” was approved, subject to the approval of the Finance and Administration Committee.

The committee’s members are: the African Union, Chile, France (Chair), Spain, the United Kingdom (Vice Chair), Communities, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the World Health Organization, according to UNITAID. Some days later, the UNITAID Policy and Strategy Committee met informally to discuss the patent pool’s legal structure. The policy and strategy meeting was a “brainstorming session”.

On the this meeting the agenda was: creating a memorandum of understanding between UNITAID and the “Patent Pool Foundation” that will run the project, as well as other details such as: technology transfer mechanisms; consistency with other international agreements and non-interference with national laws (including patent laws) that govern access to medicines; transparency and review mechanisms; and quality and safety measures.

The patent pool is intended to facilitate the creation of lower-cost generic drugs in developing countries, and to facilitate innovation in needed areas, such as AIDS medicines suitable for children. It does this by creating a “one-stop shop” for the licensing of needed technology, which reduces the costs of searching for patent holders and drawing up agreements with several different owners.

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