



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**RELIGIOUS INVESTORS URGE U.S. TRADE REPRESENTATIVE TO USE TPP TALKS TO
DECREASE ACCESS TO TOBACCO AND INCREASE ACCESS TO MEDICINES**

Citing unique health risks of tobacco, investors support carve-out in Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) commercial agreements; express concerns for the potential of TPP to limit access to medicines.

New York, NY – Tuesday, March 4th, 2014 – Members of the [Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility](http://www.iccr.org) and shareholders who have been engaging their companies to promote greater access to health have sent a letter to Ambassador Froman, the U.S. Trade Representative, urging him to place public health before commercial interests in negotiating the TPP.

Specifically, the investors are seeking assurances that disease-causing tobacco products and higher levels of protection for intellectual property rights around the development of medicines be eliminated from any trade agreements as they present clear public health concerns.

Pointing out that *tobacco is not an ordinary product in the stream of international trade*, the letter encourages Ambassador Froman *to act to ensure future trade and investment agreements don't contain policies that will result in increased death and disease*. Said Laura Berry, ICCR's Executive Director, ***“One fifth of all deaths are caused by tobacco, and unless strong action is taken, one billion deaths are expected this century, mostly among the world's poor. Tobacco cannot be considered the same as other products covered by the TPP and other trade agreements and should not benefit from the same commercial considerations.”***

All the countries participating in TPP negotiations, including the U.S., have legally binding commitments that prohibit the use of trade agreements to promote the sale or export of tobacco products. Yet, the U.S. has proposed the elimination of tariffs for TPP countries in order to facilitate the expansion of tobacco and cigarette sales in Pacific Rim markets. By including tobacco in these important trade negotiations, the investors argue, participating nations will effectively be endorsing the sale and use of this dangerous substance among their citizens.

Said Rev. Michael Crosby of the Province of St. Joseph of the Capuchin Order, ***“By allowing U.S. tobacco to be promoted in the TPP we seriously undermine the World Health Organization’s (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and, by extension, our country’s credibility and commitment to this unanimously-endorsed initiative. That Malaysia has already taken the unprecedented step of calling for tobacco’s exemption from the talks is a clear indication that they correctly perceive the danger in further opening their markets to these products. We strongly urge Ambassador Froman to stand with Malaysia in calling for tobacco’s exemption from the TPP.”***

Cathy Rowan, who represents the Maryknoll Sisters and has been actively engaging companies on access to medicines issues on their behalf said, ***“Maryknoll missionaries are present in the slums and barrios of growing urban centers, in rural villages, in refugee camps, in indigenous communities - in dynamic places where people work hard for a life of dignity and often balance on the edge of survival. We believe their needs – including their health - must be seriously considered in discussions of the rules of trade. From what we know of the TPP negotiations, particularly the expansion of tobacco sales and the enhancement of intellectual property rights, the proposed agreement will put commercial interests and profits before public health.”***

About the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR):

Currently celebrating its 43rd year, ICCR is the pioneer coalition of active shareholders who view the management of their investments as a catalyst for change. Its 300 member organizations with over \$100 billion in AUM have an enduring record of corporate engagement that has demonstrated influence on policies promoting justice and sustainability in the world.