



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Shareholders Applaud ViiV Healthcare for Sharing its Patent to Vital Pediatric HIV Drug**

***Decision to enter the Medicines Patent Pool (MPP) with abacavir will allow for low-cost manufacture, increasing access to life-saving medication for millions of children worldwide***

**New York, New York, Wednesday, February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013** – Today, shareholders of the parent companies of ViiV Healthcare--a joint venture of GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), Pfizer and Shionogi--congratulate the company for showing leadership by agreeing to share the license for the generic manufacture of its pediatric HIV drug, abacavir, with the Medicines Patent Pool. Launched by UNITAID, the Pool is a system for drug patent holders to license HIV medicines to generic companies.

Of the 3.4 million children living with HIV, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that only 562,000 currently have access to affordable medicines to treat the disease as many of the available adult formulations aren't safe for pediatric use. The MPP/ViiV collaboration allows for the manufacture and distribution of a generic formulation of abacavir -- a pediatric HIV drug recommended by the World Health Organization as critically needed medicine for children with the disease. This license would make the drug available in 118 countries effectively covering 98.7% of the infected child population worldwide.

Members of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) have been engaging companies in the pharmaceutical industry to advocate for improving access to affordable HIV medicines since 1999. In February of 2011, ICCR hosted a multi-stakeholder roundtable including representatives from the MPP, leading pharmaceutical companies, NGOs such as Doctors without Borders and Oxfam, as well as inter-governmental organizations like the WHO, to explore and work through some of the barriers to entering the patent pool.

Said Cathy Rowan of Trinity Health, ***“As faith-based investors, we advocate for pharmaceutical companies to address the access to health needs of the most vulnerable. It is estimated that nearly three-fourths of children living with HIV and who are eligible for treatment do not have access to the medicines they need. Pharmaceutical companies must adapt their business models to address these needs, and the sharing of patents with the Medicines Patent Pool offers a good example of how this can be managed effectively.”***

Lauren Compere of Boston Common Asset Management commented, ***“As investors in GSK, the majority partner of ViiV, we commend ViiV for taking this critical step in addressing the unmet need for pediatric formulations. We encourage other pharmaceutical companies to take note of ViiV’s leadership and public show of confidence for the Medicines Patent Pool and follow its example.”***

According to Pat Zerega of Mercy Investment Services, ***“Our continuing work on the issue of access to treatment includes the hope that the MPP will be an effective method to manufacture and distribute affordable generics. This tool is now enhanced with the participation of ViiV. We hope other companies will take another look at how they could participate in the work of the pool.”***

The MPP is currently in negotiations with Boehringer-Ingelheim, Bristol-Myers Squibb and F. Hoffman-La Roche to share similar licenses on HIV medicine patents.

There are an additional three pharmaceutical companies that are not currently in negotiations with the MPP: Abbott Laboratories, Johnson & Johnson, and Merck.

Said Sr. Barbara Aires of the Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth, ***“ViiV’s announcement begins to fulfill the promise of finding new treatments for HIV/AIDS and other diseases envisioned by Glaxo and Pfizer through the creation of ViiV. We congratulate the scientists at ViiV and urge others to respond in kind.”***

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**About the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR):**

**Currently celebrating its 42<sup>nd</sup> 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. [www.iccr.org](http://www.iccr.org)**