**Johannesburg -**The Fix the Patent Laws coalition welcomes the Competition Commission’s announcement earlier today that they will investigate the pricing of several cancer medicines in South Africa. This is a major victory in our struggle to ensure that all people in South Africa can access the medicines they need to stay healthy and alive.

Earlier this year our coalition launched the Tobeka Daki Campaign for Access to Trastuzumab during a [global day of action](http://www.fixthepatentlaws.org/?p=1127). The campaign was named after Tobeka Daki – a fearless comrade and cancer activist who died of breast cancer in November 2016. Even though Tobeka’s doctor thought she should be provided trastuzumab, Tobeka could never access the medicine due to its high price – over half a million rand per treatment course in the private sector.

The Competition Commission probe announced today will investigate the price of cancer medicines of three pharmaceutical companies. One of these companies is Roche Holdings AG, which will be investigated for the excessive pricing of trastuzumab (the medicine Tobeka never had the chance to try). The investigation specifically relates to “excessive pricing”, “exclusionary conduct”, and “price discrimination”. While Tobeka was unable to access this medicine, Roche made USD 8.9 billion profit in 2015.

The Commission will also investigate local pharmaceutical company Aspen Pharmacare for alleged “abuse of dominance”. Reports in April this year indicated that the Spanish Markets and Competition Commission initiated anti-trust proceedings against Aspen. In October 2016, Aspen was fined over EUR 5 million by the Italian Competition Authority for having abused its dominant position by increasing prices of four of its anti-cancer medicines by up to 1,500%.

The Commission also initiated an investigation against pharmaceutical company Pfizer Inc. for “suspected excessive pricing of lung cancer medication”.

We are encouraged by the Commission’s undertaking to investigate manufacturers of excessively priced cancer medicines. We will be monitoring the Commission’s progress for the duration of these investigations. We are committed to assisting the Commission in their investigation and to ensure that cancer survivors and people who have lost loved ones to cancer have a place at the table. These investigations give hope that more people living with cancer will in future be able to access the medicines that will give them a chance at life.

**For more information and to arrange interviews contact:**

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The Fix the Patent Laws coalition was founded in November 2011 by the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), Doctors without Borders (MSF) and SECTION27. Today the coalition has 34 member organisations – including the Cancer Alliance and its various member groups working on cancer-related issues. The coalition has for several years now called on the Department of Trade and Industry to finalise a policy on intellectual property that would ensure that the right to access healthcare is prioritised over the private interests of pharmaceutical companies – as required by the Constitution of South Africa. You can read more about the campaign at [www.FixThePatentLaws.org](http://www.fixthepatentlaws.org/)

In South Africa, the annual price charged by Roche for trastuzumab in the private sector is around USD 38 365 (ZAR 516,700). The few public facilities which can access trastuzumab do so at a lower price of around USD 15 735 (ZAR 211,920) per year. But, health economists have shown that a year’s worth of trastuzumab can be produced and sold for only USD 240, a price that includes a 50% increase above the cost of production for profit.