

Dutch lawmakers reject online piracy treaty

May 29 2012

(AP) — Dutch lawmakers adopted a motion Tuesday urging the government not to sign a controversial international treaty aimed at reining in online piracy.

The motion was another setback for the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement, known as ACTA, which has run into opposition around the world.

The European Union suspended efforts to ratify the treaty in February amid a storm of protest from activists who say the agreement would stifle free speech and access to information.

Lisa Neves Goncalves — a spokeswoman for the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation — said the government had earlier this year stated it would avoid signing the treaty until it was clear it did not breach the Dutch or EU constitutions. That clarity must come from the European Court of Justice, which the EU has asked to check whether ACTA violates any fundamental EU rights.

The treaty has been under negotiation for years. Its drafters say it is needed to harmonize international standards to protect the rights of those who produce music, movies, pharmaceuticals, fashion goods, and a range of other products that often fall victim to piracy and intellectual property theft.

The U.S. has signed the agreement. The EU and 22 EU member states signed ACTA on Jan. 26, 2012 in Tokyo.

Although the European Council — the European Union heads of government — unanimously approved ACTA in December, for the EU to be a party to the treaty, all 27 member countries — including the Netherlands — would have to formally ratify it.

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