

STATEMENT ON THE DOHA ROUND NEGOTIATIONS

# Time to pull the plug on WTO-Doha Trade Deal

Current proposals are further proof of anti-development nature of the Round

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The Stop the New Round Coalition (SNR) joins peoples' organizations and movements across the globe in calling for the rejection of the WTO Doha Round and we demand that the Philippine government turn around and walk away from these unfair and unjust negotiations.

The SNR Coalition has consistently opposed the WTO Doha Round negotiations. We pointed out as early as 2003 that the Philippines cannot afford a new round of trade agreements that would further liberalize our agriculture, fisheries and industrial goods market and open up the services sector. Not when the most marginalized and most vulnerable sectors are still reeling from the negative effects of the previous round-the GATT- Uruguay Round agreements and definitely not now when we are experiencing multiple crises of rising food and fuel costs, job losses and insecurities, and climate change.

Our position then and now is to call for the rejection of the Doha Round. Stripped of its "development" rhetoric-its avowed objective to address trade and development concerns of developing countries, the Doha Round is nothing more than an ambitious agenda to further open up markets for goods and services and consolidate the dominance and control of rich and developed countries and the big corporations over international trade and investment markets.

The ambitious agenda for greater market access and further liberalization of trade has consistently dominated these negotiations, sidestepping the concerns of developing countries over disciplines on subsidies, special and differential treatment and flexibilities.

Developing countries like the Philippines have already made major concessions for the sake of Doha in the course of these negotiations. These concessions represent a huge erosion of policy space or the ability to use trade as a development tool. On the other hand, developed countries led by the United States and the EU have consistently evaded their commitments to reduce farm subsidies which have allowed their economies to dominate the global agricultural market while pushing for greater market access for their own goods and services.

In agriculture, the limited demand for flexibilities in defense of the livelihoods of small food producers under the Special Products and Special Safeguard Mechanisms for developing countries, has been further watered-down to the point of making these provisions ineffective and useless.

In the NAMA negotiations, we have seen so clearly how ambition has trumped flexibilities. We have seen how the industrialized countries have successfully pushed a highly ambitious formula for reduction of industrial and fisheries tariffs whilst undermining the demand for flexibilities. NAMA has been reduced to a numbers game where developing countries like the Philippines would have to reduce tariffs by over 60 % with limited recourse for exemptions and flexibilities. An agreement on

NAMA would mean de-industrialization, erosion of policy space, huge revenue losses and job losses and insecurity for countries like the Philippines.

The imbalance in Doha is further manifested in the services negotiations. The US and the EU, whose corporations dominate global trade in services, have consistently been trying to muscle in their agenda for a more liberalized services regime which threatens developing countries right to regulate these investments. A deal on services would put even essential services, like health and education, at the mercy of market predators and at the expense of the welfare and wellbeing of the poor in developing countries.

Aside from the substantive elements of the deal, the process of the negotiations also reflects a grave imbalance. The Doha round negotiations have been characterized by a lack of transparency, by bullying tactics and intimidation, and exclusion. The on-going mini-Ministerial meeting that is taking place in Geneva is further proof of this. Only about a third of WTO member countries were invited to participate in the meetings.

The Doha negotiations have gone from bad to worse. To conclude a bad deal like Doha at any other time would be a grave mistake for developing countries like the Philippines. To conclude a bad deal like Doha now, when the world is facing multiple crises that further burden the poor, would be a catastrophe.

Time to pull the plug on Doha.

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