

A Call to Action to Social Movements, Mass Organizations and All Civil Society Groups

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No Deal in the Hong Kong Ministerial! WTO Out of Food and Agriculture!

With only two months to go before the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Sixth Ministerial Meeting in Hong Kong, pressure is mounting among WTO delegates to come up with an agreement to save the WTO from the humiliation of yet another round of failed talks. On October 19-20, WTO members will convene in Geneva for the General Council (GC) to take stock of the progress in achieving the so called Doha Development Round. The Doha Round was launched in November 2001 and most negotiations were expected to be final by January 2005.

Although current negotiations appear deadlocked in all the main negotiating areas—agriculture, services and non agricultural market access (NAMA)—there are serious possibilities that through clever maneuvering and opportunistic deal making, the trade majors (particularly the US and the EU) with help from some developing countries (particularly India and Brazil) will attempt to push through a trade deal that will provide big gains to national and transnational corporations and highly skilled professionals from developed and developing countries, but which will prove disastrous to the majority of the peoples and communities of the world, especially farmers, fisher-folk, workers, migrants and other vulnerable groups.

Deal-making Through Exclusive Groups, and Divide and Rule

Negotiations are continuing in their usual non-transparent and top down manner, with countries forging new temporary alliances to suit their negotiating interests. There is now a new power equation in the negotiations: the "new QUAD" which consists of the US, EU, Brazil and India, with Brazil and India putting themselves up as defenders of the interests of developing countries in all areas of negotiations. Brazil and India sold out the interests of peoples when accepting the July Framework in 2004 and we fear that the same will happen again.

US and EU disregard for real Special and Differential Treatment and for taking Implementation Issues seriously show that the WTO does not provide any scope to safeguard agriculture, services and industry in developing countries, and are clear examples of why the WTO is not the right venue in which to negotiate the future of food and agriculture.

The Tasks Before Us

The July Framework has practically eliminated any and all development space in all the areas being negotiated in the WTO. It is now up to us—social movements, mass organizations and other civil society organizations—to take a firm stand against the ongoing negotiations and ensure that our food, agriculture, health, jobs, natural resources, environment, services, industries and sovereignty are not bargained away for the profits of a handful of corporations and elite professionals.

We have to give a clear message to our governments that no deal in Hong Kong is better than a bad deal, and that the only possibilities ahead of us in the current negotiations are deals that range from bad to worse.

In specific, we demand that:

1. Liberalization and privatization policies pushed through the WTO, and regional and bilateral agreements must stop.
2. There must be no further liberalization of agriculture trade. Tariffs and other forms of protection against imports at present offer the best ways to guarantee the ability of peasant farmers to make a living from agriculture; tariffs must not be lowered, and each country should have the right to protect its farmers.
3. Moving trade distorting subsidies from one box to another only hides them, but does not actually cut them. This box-swapping to maintain trade distorting subsidies that benefit agribusiness interests are yet more reason why we must get the WTO and free trade agreements out of food and agriculture.
4. Countries must have the right to use self-selected domestic criteria to protect their food and agriculture sectors, and particularly their peasant and family farmers and agricultural labour. Especially developing countries should be able to exercise the right to re-impose Quantitative Restrictions (QRs) in instances of import surges and to protect rural livelihoods and development.
5. The dumping of agricultural products must stop without any preliminary conditions. Announcement of a schedule for the phase-out of export subsidies by the EU and US should not be seen as meaningful concessions and should not serve as a reason for developing countries to give in on other agreements or to sign any agreement on agriculture in the WTO.
6. Developing country governments must not accept Mode 4 concessions as an incentive to open up their domestic services sectors to further liberalization, or to provide market access in agriculture or NAMA. Mode 4 allows for services provision through the movement of natural persons across international borders, and many developing countries are using this as a bargaining chip to allow businesses from developed countries access into their own services markets. However, any gains from Mode 4 will only benefit skilled, white collar professionals and lead to a brain drain from developing to industrialized countries, while semi and unskilled workers will be blocked from movement across borders as before.
7. In services negotiations, the EU, Japan, Australia, Switzerland, Korea and Taiwan have tabled proposals on “complementary approaches” that call for obligatory liberalization of services in a specified number of sub-sectors and with quantitative indicators. In some proposals, countries’ commitments would be “benchmarked” with scores. The proposals are a move to get developing countries to accelerate and deepen services liberalization commitments, and take away even the little flexibility that developing countries have left under the existing GATS framework. While these

proposals have been challenged by the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), the Africa Group, Caribbean countries and some ASEAN members, a few developing countries (such as India) are supporting “benchmarking” in the hope that they will make gains on market access through mode 4 provisions.

“Benchmarking,” “complementary approaches” and all such proposals to accelerate and deepen services liberalisation must be opposed. Countries must have the freedom to define policies according to their own specific structural conditions, with adequate domestic regulations, and legal and institutional measures to counteract the power of transnational corporations. This is especially important in the case of LDCs and many developing countries who have already undertaken unilateral liberalisation under the structural adjustment programmes imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

8. Negotiations in NAMA must be stopped altogether since the potential negative impacts of de-industrialization from NAMA agreement are great. NAMA was never a priority under the Doha Declaration. However, if NAMA negotiations do continue, current formulas for tariff reduction and tariff binding in NAMA must be opposed.

9. The Pakistan proposal must not be accepted as a compromise formula for NAMA negotiations since it will not address the problem of de-industrialization that is likely to arise from NAMA. Developing countries should not be coerced into binding their remaining tariff lines. Binding will limit the options for developing countries to nurture their infant industries and hasten the process of de-industrialization. This is especially so in LDCs, most of who have already been forced to undertake unilateral liberalization under the structural adjustment programmes imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

10. Fisheries must be removed from NAMA negotiations, and the WTO should get out of fisheries altogether.

11. Comprehensive assessments of the impacts of past liberalisation on agriculture, services and industry must be conducted, and measures should be taken to counter the adverse effects of liberalisation.

12. The LDCs and the G 90* must hold firm and not give in to the demands of developed countries for market access, “benchmarking,” and reduction of agriculture and industrial tariffs. Those who gain from the current negotiations are the industries in the major food exporting countries and those with well developed, strong and high-end service and industrial sectors.

13. All negotiations and discussions must be fully participatory and transparent. The Five Interested Parties (FIPs), the “new QUAD” and other such arbitrary and exclusive groupings must be disbanded. All delegations must have full freedom to participate in negotiations as they consider fit.

In the coming months, forces in favor of liberalization and privatization policies will try to get the WTO consolidated as the engine of global trade. It is our challenge to halt these trends, and to initiate processes to reverse the current trends of liberalisation and privatization, return to countries and to peoples the possibilities to protect their food production, fisheries, public services and industries, and to shift decision making about economic policies to spaces outside the WTO. The WTO must be crippled as a mechanism of neo-liberal globalization.

HALT THE WTO NEGOTIATIONS AND STOP THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FURTHER FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS!

WTO OUT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES, PUBLIC SERVICES AND OTHER

ESSENTIAL PUBLIC GOODS!

STOP THE DE-INDUSTRIALISATION OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES!

* An umbrella body of the African Group, the least developed countries and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group

Signed by:

African Forum on Alternatives, Senegal
Agricultural Missions, Inc. (AMI), New York, USA
All Nepal Peasants' Association (ANPA), Nepal
Alliance of Food Sovereignty Campaigns (AFSC), Bangladesh
Alliance for the Protection of Human Rights and National Resources (ANRHR), Sri Lanka
Amigos de la Tierra - Chil
Amigu di Tera-Friends of the Earth, Curaçao, Netherland Antilles
Angikar, Bangladesh
Assembly of the Poor, Thailand
Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)
Asia-Pacific Networ
for Food Sovereignty (APNFS).
ATTAC, Japan
ATTAC Switzerland
Awaz Foundation Pakistan: Centre for Development Services, Pakistan
Bangladesh Federation of Rural & Urban Poor, Bangladesh.
Bangladesh Krishok Federation, Bangladesh.
Bangladesh Sramajibi Kendra (BSK),
Bangladesh.
BPMP - Alliance of Progressive Peasants of the Philippines, Philippines.
CADTM, Belgium.
Campanya Prou_OMC, Catalonia.
CDL, Bangladesh.
CENSAT— Friends of the Earth, Colombia.
Centre for Budget Advocacy of ISODEC, Accra, Ghana.
Centre for Popular Education, Zimbabwe.
CECCAM, Mexico.
CIEDS Collective, Bangalore, India.
COECO Ceiba — Amigos de la Tierra, Costa Rica.
Concern, Nepal.
Delhi Forum, India.
Diverse Women for Diversity, USA.
Ecumenical Support Services, Zimbabwe
Europe solidaire sans frontières (ESSF, France)
Focus on the Global South, India, Thailand and the Philippines
Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy, USA
Foodfirst Information and Action Network, Belgium
Forum for Indigenous Perspectives and Action, India
Freedom from Debt Coalition, Philippines
Friends of the Earth, Argentina
Friends of the Earth, Australia
Friends of the Earth, Costa Rica
Friends of the Earth, Honduras

Friends of the Earth, Mauritius
Friends of the Earth, Sweden
Friends of the Earth, Uruguay
Grassroots International, USA
Grupo de Solidaridad-Arenal, Nicaragua
IBON, Philippines
Institute for Global
Justice (IGJ), Indonesia
Integrated Rural Development Foundation of the Philippines (IRDF), Philippines
Intercultural Resources, New Delhi, India
International Gender and Trade Network, Asia
International Gender and Trade Network
Jagrata Juba Shangha (JJS), Bangladesh
Jubilee Kyushu on World Debt and Poverty, Japan
Jubilee South
Jubilee South Africa, South Africa.
Karmojibi Nari, Bangladesh
Karnataka Social Forum, Bangalore, India
Kilusang Mangangisda-Pilipina
Fisherfolk Movement, Philippines
Kissan Bachao Tehreek Pakistan (KBTPK), Pakistan
KPMP - Congress of Workers' Unity, Philippines
La Via Campesina
Labour Forum on WTO, Bangladesh
Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform (MONLAR), Sri Lanka
National Farmers' Assembly, Sri Lanka
National Fishworkers Forum (NFF), India
National Home & Domestic Women Workers Union, Bangladesh
PAN Asia and the Pacific
Participatory Development Initiatives (PDI), Pakistan
Philippine Network of Rural Development Institute (PhilNet-RDI), Philippines
Public Citizen, USA
Rapid Agrarian Conflict Appraisal (RACA) Institute, Indonesia
Roots for Equity, Pakistan
SEWA, Nepal
SOBREVIVENCIA-Friends of the Earth, Paraguay
Solidaritas Perempuan, (Women's Solidarity for Human Rights), Indonesia
Solidarity Africa Network in Action, Kenya
Tamilnadu Agricultural Labourers Movement (TALM), India
Textile Garment Workers Federation (TGWF), Bangladesh
Thanal, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India
The Development Group for Alternative Policies, USA
The Oakland Institute, USA
The Transnational Institute, Netherlands
United Labour Federation (ULF), Bangladesh
VOICE, Bangladesh.
WARBE, Bangladesh.
Women's Rehabilitation Centre(WOREC), Kathmandu, Nepal
Women's Agenda for Change, Cambodia.
World Prout Assembly - USA
Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development, Zimbabwe