



Stop the EU's corporate trade agenda

Seattle to Brussels Network, part of Our World is Not For Sale <http://www.s2bnetwork.org>

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

STOP THE WTO TALKS AND BURY THE DOHA ROUND

More than 70 European NGOs demand a new approach to the multilateral trading system

Brussels, 28 June 2006 – Over seventy European Civil Society Organisations from 21 countries [1] have today demanded a halt to the Doha round of WTO talks. Tomorrow, EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson and the European foreign ministers will meet in Geneva for a WTO Mini-Ministerial, which will attempt to strike a last minute deal to rescue the stalled negotiations.

John Hilary from War on Want said: “The time has come to admit that the current WTO system will not result in a pro-development deal. The Doha round must be scrapped- the current package would be a bad deal, serving exclusively the interests of the biggest corporations around the world. The only chance for a real development agenda is to bury the Doha Round, tear up the text and start anew.”

Campaigners call on rich nations to completely re-evaluate their trade-policy and demand that the way trade negotiations are conducted should be fundamentally reformed. Many of the Civil Society Organisations are also signatories to a global demand to governments for the talks to be abandoned which has now been signed by over 100 organisations [2]. They also question the legitimacy of the Mini-Ministerial in which the majority of WTO members will not even be represented.

The campaigners dismiss EU and U.S. attempts to cast the Doha Agenda as a multilateral effort to advance development as completely hypocritical. A series of recent economic reports [3] show steadily shrinking gains for developing countries: The World Bank reduced initial projections of \$ 500 billion in 2003 to a mere \$ 96 billion in 2005, with only \$16 billion going to a few developing countries such as Brazil, India and China. The rest of the money is flowing to developed countries. The majority of the population in many developing countries, especially sub-Saharan and other least developed countries, will become even poorer.

Instead of reviewing the Agreement on Agriculture to address food sovereignty, livelihood concerns, and survival needs of hundreds of millions of farmers worldwide, agriculture talks have focused on expanding global markets for exporters and large agribusinesses from developed and some developing countries. In the NAMA negotiations on industrial tariffs and natural resources, the tariff cuts and deregulations proposed by developed countries will have significant and detrimental long-term impacts world wide, especially in developing countries, such as deindustrialisation, loss of jobs and further exploitation of natural resources.

Sonja Meister of Friends of the Earth Europe said: “The proposals on the table for these talks seriously threaten the livelihood of people, especially women, and the environment around the world. Cheap food, clothing or electronic goods are of little use to people who cannot earn a living in decent

working conditions. Escalating international trade in natural resources is likely to damage global biodiversity and increase poverty for millions in the world's poorest communities."

Frédéric Viale from Attac said: "These talks have degenerated into blackmail of the governments of developing countries, who are threatened with a break-down of the multilateral trade system to make them accept a detrimental deal. We are for multilateral rules for international trade. But we have to explore powerful new rules and policies that promote human and women's rights, development and the environment in all countries around the world."

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Notes:

[1] The Seattle to Brussels Network is a network of European civil society organisations aiming to develop a sustainable, socially and democratically accountable trade system
www.s2bnetwork.org

[2] The open letter '*Multilateral trading system: time for a new approach*' was signed by 103 international Organisations and was sent out world wide to ministers. It provides background information to this statement and can be downloaded from
<http://www.s2bnetwork.org/s2bnetwork/download/Letter%20to%20Ministers%20June%202006%20English.pdf?id=122>

[3] A series of devastating reports on the potential outcomes of the Doha Round were published by the World Bank, the UN, and several think tanks, notably:

'Agricultural Trade Reform and the Doha Development Agenda', Kym Anderson and Will Martin et. al. World Bank Report, Nov.1, 2005

'Winners and Losers: Impact of the Doha Round on Developing Countries', Sandra Polaski, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC, 2006

'Trade Sustainability Impact Assessment of the Doha Development Agenda - Global Overview', IARC/University of Manchester, study commissioned by DG Trade/European Commission, final draft report

'The WTO's Empty Hong Kong Development Package: How the WTO's 97% Duty Free Proposal could leave poor Countries worse off', Action Aid International and Public Citizen