

APPEAL TO EU MEMBER STATES AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION FROM MORE THAN 100 EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS

After Cancun: Drop the demand to start WTO negotiations on the Singapore Issues once and for all from the EU trade agenda !

The European Union has been unsuccessful in its strategy to convince WTO member states to start formal negotiations on a set of new rules on investment, competition, transparency in government procurement, and trade facilitation. During the 5th Ministerial of the WTO in Cancun, 10-14 September 2003, a majority of WTO members clearly stated that negotiations on these so-called Singapore Issues should not be launched, as the WTO is not the appropriate forum to address these issues.

The negotiating strategy employed by the European Union must be regarded as one of the main reasons for the failure of this Conference. While the final hour offer on the 14 September by the Art. 133 Committee and Commissioner Lamy to drop two of the four issues from the negotiating (investment and competition) may be regarded as a step in the right direction, it was too little, too late. Furthermore, this was considered to be a tactical response and not a meaningful reaction to the well argued demands of the majority of developing countries not to proceed on any of the Singapore Issues.

In the run up to Cancun, more than 100 civil society groups throughout the European Union had issued a call to the EU Trade Council in Palermo, 6 July 2003, demanding a withdrawal of the EU demands for WTO expansion in Cancun. It was calling on EU Member States to:

- withdraw support for the start of negotiations on the so-called “new issues” in Cancun
- stop engaging in misleading trade off and arm twisting strategies, and instead implement previously agreed commitments, before asking for any further concessions from developing countries in return
- review thoroughly, and then fundamentally reform, the existing trade rules, in order to shift in focus from trade and investment liberalisation as an end goal, to the promotion of sustainable development and poverty eradication.
- promote a fair and balanced international framework for investment, preferably located in the UN, and based on a set of rules which would support sustainable development and make corporations responsible for their practices
- revise accordingly the negotiating mandate of Commissioner Lamy.

We reiterate our demands and invite you to take them into your most serious consideration in the run up of the next General Council of the WTO, scheduled for 15 December 2003. We urge you to make sure that the EU will drop, once and for all, the Singapore Issues from the EU agenda for negotiations in the WTO.

This decision will give a positive signal to developing countries that the EU draws the right conclusions from the failure of Cancun, and is prepared to respect the will of the majority of WTO member states.

European civil society call to EU trade ministers in Palermo, 6 July 2003: WITHDRAW EU DEMANDS FOR THE EXPANSION OF THE WTO IN CANCUN

The Fifth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to be held in Cancun in September 2003 will take a landmark decision over whether the WTO's agenda should be expanded to include new negotiations on a multilateral investment agreement, competition policy, transparency in government procurement and trade facilitation. As EU trade ministers meet in Palermo, Italy (6 July) to discuss their negotiating position in advance of the WTO Ministerial, the undersigned take this opportunity to reaffirm the central role that the EU Member States must play in deciding the EU's position at the WTO, taking into full consideration the concerns expressed by all civil society groups. We call on EU Member States to call the European Commission to account and halt the push for an expanded WTO agenda.

The European Commission repeatedly frames its ambitions at the WTO in the context of development and sustainable trade. It refers to the 'Doha Development Agenda', and more recently has started to brand possible negotiations on investment as an 'Investment for Development Framework'. In reality, there is no evidence that WTO agreements on the proposed four new issues, especially investment, will enhance development for the poorest and most marginalised countries, let alone that they will be the ones to 'benefit the most'.

The introduction of new rules at the WTO will grant multinational companies increased rights while also restricting the ability of governments to maintain and create strong regulatory frameworks and rights for citizens and communities. Protection of the environment and promotion of social and economic equality depend on government action to ensure that patterns of investment and government procurement promote, rather than undermine, sustainable development.

1. We call on EU trade ministers to withdraw their support for the start of negotiations on the new issues at the WTO Ministerial Conference in Cancun as proposed by the European Commission. The EU should base its policy positions on evidence of development and environmental impacts of the new issues, in order to guarantee coherence with broader EU policy goals in these areas.

In order to secure its proposal to expand the WTO agenda, the European Commission has linked its process for reforming the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), to developing countries agreeing to move forward on the new issues. The fact of the matter is that the EU's current WTO proposal on agriculture would in reality not commit the EU to do much more than it is already doing and this trade-off represents an empty offer for developing countries.

WTO agreements on investment and competition would also enhance rights of big agri-business corporations further undermining the livelihoods of small farmers and rural populations worldwide.

2. We call on EU trade ministers to stop engaging in misleading trade-off strategies. We ask them to press for implementation of its previously agreed commitments to reduce subsidised dumping and move towards more sustainable agriculture without extracting further concessions from developing countries in return.

Agreement to negotiate these so-called 'new issues' within the WTO is not a foregone conclusion. Ever since the First Ministerial Conference of the WTO, held in Singapore in 1996, most developing countries have consistently argued against such new negotiations for both substantive reasons and because this would expand the existing WTO workload which is already beyond the capacity of many delegations. At a recent WTO meeting in Geneva, both the Africa group and the Least-Developed Country (LDC) group reaffirmed their opposition to the launch of negotiations on new issues. Even more recently, LDC Trade Ministers meeting in Dhaka, Bangladesh, 31 May – 2 June, and the African Trade Ministers' meeting in Mauritius from 19-20 June called for the continuation of the 'study process' rather than starting full blown negotiations. Given the sustained opposition from the majority of the WTO's developing country membership, the EU's insistence on adding more issues to an already overcrowded negotiating agenda is highly inappropriate.

3. We call on EU trade ministers to support an agenda to review and radically reform existing trade rules rather than forcing through a set of negotiations that most developing countries do not want.

The agenda that the European Commission is planning to take to Cancun, is not one supported by EU citizens, nor does it have the support of the majority of developing country WTO member countries. There are also doubts about majority support within EU member states. In recent meetings, trade officials from various Member States made it explicit to non-government organisations that expanding the WTO with the new issues is not their Cancun priority.

There is deep concern about the role that the European Commission is playing in the current negotiations. It is clear that pressure to expand the WTO's powers is coming from major corporate lobby groups such as the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and UNICE. The undoubted influence these groups have in the EU institutions makes it all the more necessary for the views of civil society groups to be heard and taken into account.

This corporate influence has been most prominent in the EU strategy for the WTO's negotiations on services (GATS). Leaked versions of the EU's requests for services liberalisation from 109 countries, as part of the GATS negotiations, reflect the offensive interests of the European services industry. There have been strong calls for these requests to be withdrawn. High priority should be given to develop balanced and truly democratic mechanisms for civil society to input in trade policy preparation.

4. We call on EU trade ministers to assume their decision-making responsibilities in the run up to Cancun. We encourage EU Member States to voice their concerns about the current position of the European Commission the new issues and support a European negotiating agenda which is more responsive to the concerns of EU citizens and to the demands of poverty reduction and sustainable development. The new issues have to be withdrawn from the EU position. This means a revision of the negotiating mandate that the Council gave to Commissioner Lamy back in 1999 before the Third Ministerial Conference in Seattle.

Signatories:

1. ActionAid Alliance, Belgium
2. ActionAid UK
3. Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network , Belgium
4. Africa Groups of Sweden
5. Agir Ici, France
6. Alert! Groningen, the Netherlands
7. Amigos de la Tierra, Spain
8. Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana (ARCI),Italy
9. Associazione Rurale Italiana - ARI, Italy
10. Attac Austria
11. Attac Finland
12. Attac Flanders
13. Attac France
14. Attac Denmark
15. Attac Hungary
16. Attac London
17. Attac Spain
18. Attac Sweden
19. Azione Aiuto, Italy
20. Berne Declaration, Switzerland
21. Biodiversity Conservation Center, Russia
22. Both ENDS, the Netherlands
23. Buendnis fuer Eine Welt / OelE, Austria
24. Bureau Verantwoord, Tilburg, the Netherlands
25. Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz/Friends of the Earth Germany
26. Campaign for the Welfare State (For velferdsstaten), Norway

- 27. Campaign to Reform the World Bank, Italy
- 28. Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN)
- 29. CCOMC, France
- 30. Center for Encounter and Active Non-Violence, Austria
- 31. Center for Environmental Public Advocacy, Slovak Republic
- 32. Center for International Environmental Law - Europe, Geneva, Switzerland
- 33. Central Euro-Asian Studies (CEAS), Sweden
- 34. Centro Internazionale CROCEVIA, Italy
- 35. Christian Aid, UK
- 36. Cipsi, Italy
- 37. Coalition of the Flemish North-South Movement-11.11.11
- 38. Cocis (a federation of NGO's), Italy
- 39. Coordination Paysanne Européenne / European Farmers Coordination, Belgium
- 40. Corporate Europe Observatory, the Netherlands
- 41. Circolo Culturale Palazzo Cattaneo, Italy
- 42. Dachverband entwicklungspolitischer Organisationen in Kärnten, Austria
- 43. DeA - Donne e Ambiente, Italy
- 44. Deutsche Kommission Justitia et Pax, Germany
- 45. Dreikönigsaktion der Kath. Jungschar, Austria
- 46. Ecologistas en Acción, Spain
- 47. Estonian Green Movement-FoE, Estonia
- 48. Evangelischer Arbeitskreis für Weltmission (EAWM), Austria
- 49. Fédération Syndicale Unitaire, France
- 50. Framtiden i Våra Händer / The Future in our Hands, Sweden
- 51. Friends of the Earth Europe, Belgium
- 52. Friends of the Earth, France
- 53. Friends of the Earth, Cyprus
- 54. Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- 55. Friends of the Earth, Scotland
- 56. Friends of the Earth, Slovakia
- 57. German NGO Forum on Environment and Development - Working Group on Trade
- 58. Germanwatch, Germany
- 59. Greenpeace European Union Unit
- 60. Hnuti DUHA/Friends of the Earth Czech Republic
- 61. Initiative Colibri, GN3 Germany
- 62. Initiative Netzwerk Dreigliederung, Stuttgart, Germany
- 63. Informationsgruppe Lateinamerika (IGLA), Vienna, Austria
- 64. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)
- 65. INTI WAWA, Morarp, Sweden
- 66. Institut de Recherches de la FSU (IRHESC), Paris, France
- 67. Institut pour la Relocalisation de l'Economie (IRE), France
- 68. International Coalition for Development Action (ICDA), Brussels, Belgium
- 69. Kirchliche Arbeitsstelle Südliches Afrika (KASA), Germany
- 70. K.U.L.U.-Women and Development, Denmark
- 71. Le Monde selon les femmes, Belgium
- 72. Lila Cedius, Italy
- 73. Maan ystävät ry (Friends of the Earth Finland)
- 74. Maailmankauppojen liitto ry (The Finnish Association of World Shops)
- 75. Mani Tese, Italy
- 76. Merkur GN3, Sweden
- 77. Network of European World Shops (NEWS), Brussels, Belgium
- 78. Network Women in Development Europe (WIDE), Belgium
- 79. NOAH - Fiends of the Earth Denmark
- 80. NOVIB/Oxfam Netherlands
- 81. One World Action, UK
- 82. Oxfam Germany
- 83. Oxfam Great Britain
- 84. Oxfam Intermon, Spain
- 85. Oxfam International

- 86. Oxfam Ireland**
- 87. Oxfam Solidarité, Belgium**
- 88. People and Planet, UK**
- 89. Rete Lilliput, Italy**
- 90. ROBA dell'Altro Mondo (a fair trade organisation), Italy**
- 91. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), UK**
- 92. Social Development Group, Norway**
- 93. SydAfrika Kontakt - Southern Africa Contact, Denmark**
- 94. The Service Centre for Development Co-operation (Kepa), Finland**
- 95. Traidcraft, UK**
- 96. Transnational Institute (TNI), the Netherlands**
- 97. Tresam, Goteborg, Sweden**
- 98. Unione degli Studenti, Italy**
- 99. Unione degli Universitari, Italy**
- 100. URFIG, Belgium/France**
- 101. Urgewald, Germany**
- 102. Weltumspannend Arbeiten, Austria**
- 103. Wemos Foundation, The Netherlands**
- 104. World Development Movement, UK**
- 105. World Economy, Ecology & Development (WEED), Germany**
- 106. World Information Service on Energy (WISE) Amsterdam, the Netherlands**
- 107. WWF-European Policy Office, Brussels, Belgium**
- 108. XminusY Solidarity Fund, the Netherlands**
- 109. Zartonk-89, Armenia**