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MEDIA ADVISORY for:
Thursday, November 28

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Global Civil Society Demands Removal of WTO Obstacles to Food Security and Sustainable Development

Delegation of 80 Civil Society Experts from 31 Countries to Participate in Upcoming WTO Ministerial in Bali

A wide variety of civil society experts working together through the global [Our World Is Not for Sale \(OWINFS\) network](#) will travel to Bali for the 9th Ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO), to engage in lobbying and media work, and take action to ensure that their respective governments do not give in to a bad deal in the WTO.

Over 80 civil society experts – trade unionists, farmers, development advocates, and consumer activists – from 31 countries will travel to Bali for the 9th Ministerial meeting of the WTO, working through the global OWINFS network, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and Public Services International (PSI). Civil society delegates are participating in OWINFS activities from: Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, France, Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritius, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Philippines, Russia, Senegal, South Africa, Surinam, Switzerland, Tanzania, the United States, Uganda, the United Kingdom, and Zimbabwe.

After many failed Ministerial meetings and nearly twelve years of negotiations, the Doha Round of WTO expansion is at a crossroads. Developed countries, at the behest of their corporate interests, have pushed aside agreements to negotiate on key issues intended to correct the imbalances within the existing WTO, which formed the basis of the development mandate of Doha, such as fixing the huge asymmetries which allow rich countries to subsidize their agribusiness exports but put drastic limits on the subsidies developing countries can use to ensure food security. Even worse, developed countries re-packaged the same liberalization and market access demands of their corporate interests to try to secure an agreement on Trade Facilitation, which would place excessive implementation, regulatory, human resources, and technological burdens on developing countries – and for which developed countries have steadfastly refused to provide the required technical and financial assistance. And, they are pushing for an expansion of the [Information Technology Agreement \(ITA\)](#) and a radical new [Trade in Services Agreement \(TISA\)](#). The Director General of the WTO announced yesterday that Trade Facilitation negotiations have failed in Geneva, but could still be taken up in Bali.

Instead, civil society organizations have been demanding that any agreement for the upcoming 9th Ministerial at Bali must [begin to rebalance existing inequities](#), such as an agreement on the [G33 proposal for Food Security](#) (not a temporary “Peace Clause”), and a strong package of policy changes to benefit the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). A binding agreement on Trade Facilitation would be a tremendous step in the wrong direction.

Please find below quotes from OWINFS members and allies, and plan to attend a **civil society press conference** at the WTO Ministerial in Bali on **Tuesday, December 3rd at 12:00 NOON** in the **NGO Center** (specific room TBD) of the Bali Convention Center, where the Ministerial will be held.

Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the **International Trade Union Confederation** stated:

“Trading arrangements for agriculture have great impact on the most vulnerable of people – one billion of those depend on subsistence agricultural activities. The WTO Members must ensure that an Agreement on Agriculture guarantees food security, allows government action to support income and livelihoods of small producers and farmers.

On a separate note, there must be comprehensive understanding of what an Agreement on Trade Facilitation would entail in terms of costs, especially for developing countries and LDCs, as well as the expected results on the balance of payment. There is no reason an Agreement on Trade Facilitation is binding and exchanged for temporary solutions in Agriculture.

Let us not forget that the Doha Development Round has a clear ‘implementation agenda’ aiming at delivering the developmental mandate of the Round. The WTO Members should conclude an ambitious Agreement considering the 88 proposals that appeared earlier in the negotiations to make Special and Differential Treatment principles more operational and effective.

A wide coalition of trade unions and civil society organisations addressed a letter to the negotiating Members warning that an expanded Information Technology Agreement (ITA-II) might lead to the erosion of domestic manufacturing and loss of growth potential in higher value-added segments of information technology manufacturing. The ITA-II, whenever and if it is concluded, will likely benefit mainly transnational corporations (TNCs) in countries with advanced technological development.

At the same time, an Agreement on trade in services could lock-in and intensify the privatisation and commercialisation of quality public services, further deregulate the financial markets and impose a regulatory straightjacket on sovereign nations.”

Rosa Pavanelli, the General Secretary of **Public Services International**, said:

“The Doha round has stalled because the developed world has forgotten that trade is a tool for development, not a goal in itself. Markets do not provide universal access to quality public services, clean reliable water, energy and food. Attempts to force market provision of public services will continue to fail. Governments have learned nothing from the financial crisis if they continue to promote deregulation and profit as the only option.

These trade deals are being designed to restrict public ownership and oversight, while promoting privatisation for corporate profit. The urgent challenges of our time - poverty, climate change, rising inequality and the need for decent work for all – require that governments not be limited in creating solutions. Trade agreements must not continue to treat clean water, education for our children and healthcare for all as commodities to be traded for the primary purpose of profit. It is simply outrageous to include migrants in the trade agreements. Migrants are human beings and workers mobility can be regulated only by tripartite agreement within the ILO rules.”

Ranja Sengupta representing **Third World Network, India** added:

“If India indeed has a long term strategy to serve its poor and hungry, it cannot accept a Peace Clause that imposes more burden on it than gains. India has no choice but to fight for a permanent solution to include such subsidies in the Green box and with immediate effect.”

Dr. Arjun Karki of **LDC Watch** in Nepal said:

“A strong and meaningful LDC package in Bali is an imperative if development partners are indeed committed to trade-related development cooperation towards the most marginalised and vulnerable LDCs, going beyond their rhetoric and agreeing to action. The sticky issues of full implementation of DFQF and the elimination of subsidies on cotton must be agreed upon without any trade-offs.”

Adhemar Mineiro, Adviser to the Executive Secretariat of **REBRIP (Rede Brasileira pela Integração dos Povos – Brazilian Network for the Integration of Peoples)**, a coalition of Brazilian social movements and NGO focused on development, trade and integration issues, commented:

“The continued stalemate of the Doha Round raises doubts not only on the survival of the WTO, but mainly on the principles and assumptions upon which the organization was build up, particularly the idea of progressive liberalization. The world crisis environment served to show this clearly. It is time to the WTO to get legitimacy by serving the interests of countries that want to develop and need for that policy space and special conditions for their people, particularly to small family farmers and the poor working people. Hope that the new Brazilian DG, Ambassador Azevedo, can help in this direction. But if it is not possible for the WTO to regulate world trade according to the interests of the working people, and it continues to operate on behalf of the richest 0,1% and the corporations, another tool has to be built to regulate and manage the world trade.”

Deborah James, Director of International Programs of the **Center for Economic and Policy Research** added:

“The outrageous and hypocritical stance of the United States – blocking changes to WTO rules to allow developing countries to pursue Food Security, while refusing to reduce massive subsidies for corporate U.S. export agriculture – must be ended immediately. Trying to push a Trade Facilitation agreement down the throats of poor countries by spinning it as a "win-win" just didn't fly in the face of U.S. intransigence on Food Security. Instead the U.S. should take a development–focused approach to the negotiations which would promote shared prosperity and reduce inequality caused by damaging existing trade policies, starting with the [Turnaround Agenda](#) put forth by global civil society.”

Shefali Sharma of the **Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy**:

“I want to reiterate a [message we recently sent](#) to USTR by over 25 US food, farm, nutrition, health and economic justice groups: Our administration’s trade policy needs to learn from our domestic experience. While many in Congress are fighting to keep food stamps alive for the poorest in our population, USTR is seeking to undermine policy space for developing countries to fulfil their own food security objectives even though they have far fewer resources than are available in the US.

Many of the poor in developing countries are often also small scale agricultural producers. Contrary to the letter sent to USTR by US commodity groups and agribusiness interests on October 24, many of us acknowledge that the current agriculture rules in the WTO (including domestic support) are rigged to support big agribusiness. We do all countries a disservice when we promote only commercial export interests, ignoring the real political (and moral) imperative that governments are responsible for their citizens’ welfare, including their right to adequate and affordable food and fair prices to agriculture producers.

The G33 food security proposal is an important first step in the reframing of global trade rules to promote more equitable and stable markets, especially for countries that face huge food security

challenges. The U.S. proposal for a “Peace Clause” to suspend potential challenges to those efforts at the WTO is an unfair and inadequate response to a sensible proposal to explore new options to improve stability in national and global markets. We support the G33 proposal and call on the U.S. government to do the same.”

Alberto Zoratti, President of Italy’s **Fairwatch**, added:

“Italy will hold the EU Presidency in 2014 and, in the view of the 2015 European Year of development, we stress the need for policy coherence that EU must ensure in his trade and development strategies, supporting PVS and LDC's request for policy space in fighting poverty. Agriculture is a strategic sector for Italian economy, but insufficient access to food in quality and quantity is no more that foregone for middle class and the poorest in our country, because of a crisis generated by the same policies that affect poor people in the Global South. This is the right moment to fight the global crisis shifting from old paradigm to viable and sustainable alternatives.”

OWINFS is a global network of NGOs and social movements working for a sustainable, socially just, and democratic multilateral trading system. www.ourworldisnotforsale.org.

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