

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

ICFTU OnLine...

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DEJA VU: Development betrayed again at the WTO

Brussels, 19 December 2005 (ICFTU OnLine) :The flawed deal agreed at the WTO Ministerial today is another blow to employment and sustainable development and ignores the urgent need to improve the lives of working people, according to the world trade union body, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the NGO alliance SOLIDAR.

Speaking on behalf of 145 million workers, Guy Ryder, the General Secretary of the ICFTU said today:

"They did it again. Despite the unprecedented unity of developing countries, despite millions of people calling on them to deliver trade justice, despite the very recent crisis in world textiles trade, the industrialised countries have manipulated their way to a deal that betrays development and yet again does not address the key issue of decent work."

"The WTO's members appear determined to make the WTO more unpopular than it already is. This deal will do nothing to dispel the fears that people hold about globalisation or the image of the WTO as a club for the rich and powerful. In continuing to ignore the voices of civil society, the WTO is putting the multilateral trading system at risk."

"Although developing countries have endorsed this text, its consequences will be severe. They are going to be put under extreme pressure to open up their public services to the ravages of the free market, due to the Pandora's box the GATS text has just unleashed. How can we have a world trade system that can force people in the developing world into having to choose between going to the doctor or putting food on the table?"

"We may have lost this fight but we have not lost the battle. Trade unions and NGOs will continue to argue for a genuinely multilateral trading system with a social and labour dimension that is linked in with other global institutions such as the ILO and the UN."

Giampiero Alhadef, the Secretary General of SOLIDAR commented:

"Any pretence that the Doha negotiations were about ending poverty have been laid to rest in Hong Kong. The end date for agricultural subsidies of 2013 is poor consolation for developing countries whose workers will be the victims of the mass unemployment that will inevitably result from the NAMA deal just agreed on industrial goods.

"For years we've been witnessing the havoc indiscriminate liberalisation wreaks on people's lives. Just look at this year's crisis in the textiles sector. But our calls for something as sensible as prior employment impact assessments and respect for workers' rights have fallen on deaf ears.

"The deal on cotton beggars belief. The US media machine will claim that they have offered major concessions but the reality is that the livelihoods of millions of people in Africa are on the line.

"Even the aid for trade package is a mirage. Of the EU's pledged 2 billion euros, only 250 million euros constitutes new money.

"There has been a fundamental failure here - we are going in the wrong direction. Until the WTO starts to put people first, globalisation will not give us the world we want with decent work and a decent life for everybody."

The ICFTU represents 155 million workers through its 236 affiliated organisations in 154 countries and territories. The ICFTU is also a partner in Global Unions: <http://www.global-unions.org>

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