

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

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WTO: Trade talks collapse inevitable result of blindness to social and development concerns

Brussels, 3 April 2006: For the ICFTU, yesterday's suspension of WTO trade talks comes as no surprise given the blindingly obvious faults in a negotiation strategy that claimed to be concerned with development, but looked at nothing other than market access.

In our view, any trade talks that don't encompass changing unfair trade practices simply cannot succeed in the current international context. There is an urgent need for refocusing and rebalancing the negotiations.

The ICFTU has continuously raised its concerns about the developmental direction of the proposals which lack any proper assessment of the impact on decent work and workers' rights, and has questioned the benefits for workers worldwide.

Guy Ryder, General Secretary of the ICFTU commented:

"You simply cannot embark upon a process of changing world trade rules without assessing the effect these changes will have on people's lives. As Pascal Lamy commented, there is time for reflection now and we call upon governments to get back to the drawing board and get serious about setting up trade rules that put decent work at the heart of the system".

"Instead of making last-minute decisions, negotiators should truly assess previous experiences with liberalization in developing countries and the impacts on quality and quantity of employment, and draw the lessons of that".

"The whole approach of tit-for-tat privileging of market access cannot deliver that which workers of the world desperately need - a process of globalization that leads to more and better jobs, with workers worldwide sharing in its benefits and a trade system that corrects the imbalances and allows developing countries the space to develop.

"Trade negotiators, faced with an ever-proliferating number of regional and bilateral trade agreements, must now finally realize that the only thing which will save the multilateral trading system is its reorientation towards just trade rules," Ryder concluded.

For more information and comment, please contact the ICFTU Press Department on +32 2 224 0204 or +32 476 621 018.

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