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PRO-DEVELOPMENT APPROACH ESSENTIAL IF WTO TALKS TO RESUME

Brussels, 30 July 2008 (ITUC OnLine): Commenting on another collapse of WTO talks in Geneva after more than a week of intense negotiations, the ITUC called for negotiators to make a clear shift from the current ³NAMA² architecture for negotiations in manufactured products in order to provide less drastic tariff reductions and increased flexibilities for developing countries.

³A change in the conduct of the Doha negotiations is needed to really deliver benefits to the poor,² said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder, adding ³developed country governments have to assume their responsibilities to contribute some fairness to the world trading system and not require huge sacrifices in return for minimal commitments on their side.²

Although progress was made on a number of issues that would benefit developing countries, there remained clear imbalances in key areas. Considerable weight was brought to bear on developing countries to accept the NAMA proposals that were on the table, even though they stood to result in job losses and increased pressure on workers¹ wages and working conditions, and to prevent new industrial jobs from being created.

³Any final deal must be analysed in terms of its benefits and impact for workers and the poor,² stated Ryder. ²The competitive pressures that cause violations of workers¹ rights and unequal distribution of the benefits of trade require serious attention when talks resume if workers and the poor are to benefit from trade liberalisation. An agreement that brings more hardship to workers in developing countries is simply not acceptable.²

The ITUC represents 168 million workers in 155 countries and territories and has 311 national affiliates. Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org>

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