

>>> "ITUC Press" <press@ituc-csi.org> 30.11.2009 17:56 >>>

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WTO CONFERENCE: TRADE UNIONS INSIST JOBS COME FIRST

Brussels, 30 November 2009 (ITUC OnLine): As the 7th WTO Ministerial Conference opens in Geneva, a 60-strong trade union delegation at the talks have issued a 6-point set of demands for the negotiations, drawn up following a Trade Union Conference on 29 November addressed by WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy, Trade Ministers of Brazil, South Africa, Argentina, the EU's lead negotiator and ILO Executive Director Kari Tapiola.

"At this time of near-record levels of unemployment in many countries, it would be foolhardy to promote accelerated trade liberalisation without taking into account its implications for jobs and growth", said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder. "The priority for all countries is escaping the jobs crisis and the Doha WTO Round must be judged on the basis of the impact it would make on that objective. Its future will be determined in that light."

Other priorities in the trade union statement include addressing employment and industrial development needs of developing countries in the "NAMA" negotiations on manufactures; introducing a moratorium on financial services liberalisation under "GATS"; to establishing a fair and transparent WTO accession process; and renegotiating the WTO's Article XXIV on regional integration, to prevent undue burdens being placed on developing countries negotiating bilateral trade agreements.

"The economic crisis has shown the need for all parts of the multilateral system to pull together in order to achieve recovery," said Ryder. "The WTO needs to catch up with the rest. Since the ILO is recognised as the agency providing governments with policy guidance on employment and social protection, it should be invited to take full part in WTO working groups, negotiating groups and committee structures. Development based on the decent work agenda including core labour standards must be mainstreamed in all WTO programmes and negotiations."

Click for main ITUC Statement:

http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/Final_-_Statement-WTO-19-11-09.pdf

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 155 countries and territories and has 311 national affiliates.

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