

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

ITUC OnLine

Inequality Overshadows Tenth Anniversary of Doha Round of Trade Talks

Brussels, 14 December 2011 (ITUC OnLine): The international trade union movement has warned of growing social unrest and increased social hardship if trade liberalization continues against the backdrop of harsh unemployment and austerity measures.

Sharan Burrow, General Secretary International Trade Union Confederation said ten years since the Doha Round of trade talks opened in 2001, the global economy has witnessed a food crisis, a climate crisis, a financial crisis and a severe jobs crisis.

“The existence of the WTO has done nothing to prevent trade imbalances growing to unsustainable levels accompanied by dangerously widening income inequality,” said Sharan Burrow.

The deal on the table at the 8th meeting of Trade Ministers in Geneva 15 -17 December 2011 will not help trade to drive economic recovery, employment creation and genuine economic development, and ultimately puts the multilateral trading system at risk.

The trade union delegation attending the talks will be monitoring a number of issues up for negotiation by Ministers and will aim to maintain policy space and to keep new issues such as the Singapore issues (investment, competition policy and government procurement) out of the WTO negotiations.

“The talks should provide a package for Least Developed Countries to have duty free and quota free market access for all products, the elimination of cotton subsidies and a waiver for commitments in services,” said Sharan Burrow.

The ITUC is calling for an evaluation of the Doha round outcomes to assess its impact on providing decent work, improved living standards and diversifying the economies of developing countries.

“Without measuring the impact on developing countries and workers, it makes little sense to move forward with trade liberalization. The developmental mandate of the Doha agenda must be reaffirmed if the round is to be concluded.” said Sharan Burrow.

The highly unequal and non-transparent accession process will this year be highlighted as Russia, Vanuatu and Samoa Islands join the WTO.

Read the Global Union Statement of Priorities for the 8th WTO Ministerial Conference (Geneva 15 – 18 December 2011): <http://www.ituc-csi.org/global-unions-statement-of.html?lang=en>

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