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## AFTINET Bulletin 115, 7 July 2005

If you would like to contribute to the Bulletin, please contact Jemma Bailey at [jbailey@piac.asn.au](mailto:jbailey@piac.asn.au) or on (02) 9299 7833. Our website is <http://www.aftinet.org.au>.

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1. **What is the WTO up to now? An AFTINET public forum in Sydney on 6pm Thursday 28 July**

You are invited to a forum to discuss the issues at stake in the current round of WTO negotiations and the impact of these negotiations on people and the environment. This forum will coincide with the meeting of the WTO General Council in Geneva.

**When** 6:00pm – 7:30pm, Thursday 28 July  
**Where** Meeting Room, Level 10, PSA House  
160 Clarence Street  
Sydney

### Speakers

Tim Anderson, Lecturer in Political Economy, Sydney University  
Patricia Ranald, Principal Policy Officer, Public Interest Advocacy Centre

Alister Kentish, Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union

The next WTO Ministerial Meeting will be held in Hong Kong in December 2005. There is intense pressure on developing countries to concede to the latest demands from developed countries. In the tradition of the WTO Ministerial Meetings in Seattle and Cancun, developing countries and community groups are joining together to oppose negotiations that prioritise corporate interests over people and the environment.

This forum will look at the "progress" of the current Doha round of negotiations. The current negotiations on agriculture market access threaten food security in the developing world. The negotiations on trade in services (GATS) may convert essential services, such as water, health and education, into tradeable goods. And negotiations on trade in goods are feeding into a global 'race to the bottom' on workers' rights and the environment.

Please join us to bring these closed-door negotiations out into public debate.

To RSVP, contact Jemma Bailey on [jbailey@piac.asn.au](mailto:jbailey@piac.asn.au) or 8898 6540.

## **2. AFTINET appears before Senate Inquiry on Australia's relationship with China**

AFTINET appeared before the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee on Wednesday 29 June to present evidence to the Inquiry on Australia's relationship with China. Our submission focused on the China Free Trade Agreement and its impact on human rights, workers rights and the environment in both Australia and China. Our submission also raised concerns about the transparency of community consultations and the absence of a full public and parliamentary debate before the Government formally announced the start of negotiations on 18 April.

AFTINET's submission is available from our website, [www.aftinet.org.au](http://www.aftinet.org.au). The Senate Inquiry is due to report on 15 September 2005.

## **3. China FTA resolution passed at ALP State Conference**

A resolution on the China Free Trade Agreement was passed at the recent NSW ALP State Conference. The resolution was moved by the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union.

In summary, the resolution stated that the following preconditions must be met before the ALP would consider supporting an FTA:

- China must implement the conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and operation of free and effective trade unions must be supported by the Chinese government
- China must concede to a proper mechanism for monitoring, reporting and enforcement of core labour standards

- Health and safety standards in China must be improved to ensure that workplace deaths and injury are minimised and standards are lifted to comparable international levels
- A transparent process to identify and rectify non-tariff barriers within China at both the national and provincial level must be developed
- Robust and effective processes to ensure legal rights are enforceable including property rights
- Processes are implemented to ensure that China ceases to use a lack of environmental standards and safeguards as a competitive advantage
- Australia must implement strong anti-dumping laws to protect Australian industries from government monopolies and company profits that are underpinned by gross exploitation of workers
- Independent social audits of Australia and other regions affected by the proposed FTAs with China must be undertaken and acted upon
- Industry development policies designed to promote increased Australian manufacturing jobs through research and development and increased investment in cutting edge technology must be implemented
- Any agreement must be subject to effective public consultation and a thorough Parliamentary process
- Recognition and continuation of existing industry plans in the vehicle and textiles, clothing and footwear industries

A similar resolution was passed at the ALP State Conference in Queensland

#### **4. North and South countries differ on assessment of WTO services talks, and on the need or otherwise for a new negotiating approach**

5 July 2005

Martin Khor, Third World Network

A week of services negotiations took place at the WTO in the week 27 June to 1 July. On the final two days (Thursday and Friday) there was a discussion at plenary level on "Review of progress and organisation of future work." At the debate on that agenda item, some major developed and developing countries gave significantly different assessments of the state of the services negotiations.

Major developed countries have been projecting a sense of crisis over what they consider to be unsatisfactory market access offers by developing countries. In light of this, the European Union is asking that new negotiating approaches ("alternative complementary methods") be adopted by the General Council meeting in July.

This was taken by other members as a code for what was widely called "benchmarking", which again is a code term for asking countries to commit themselves to liberalization in a list of sectors of major economic value. On the other hand, many developing countries were of the view that there is no crisis, and that the talks in services are not lagging behind talks in agriculture or NAMA (non agricultural market access).

In the market access offers, say the developing countries, the problem is not the lack of offers by developing countries but rather the lack of offers by the developed countries in Mode 4, or the opening of their labour markets to workers from developing countries.

Many developing countries also rejected the EU proposal to adopt new negotiating modalities, as the existing methods are adequate, while the new proposed approach may compromise the flexibilities that the developing countries now have in the GATS over the sectors and pace for liberalization.

## **5. Preparations for WTO Ministerial in Hong Kong - Details for NGO and media registration**

As mentioned in previous AFTINET bulletins, the next WTO Ministerial will be held in Hong Kong from 13 – 18 December 2005. In the tradition of previous Ministerial meetings, there will be a large contingent of NGO's and activists from around the world in Hong Kong to bring the WTO negotiations out from behind closed doors. Many voices will join together in Hong Kong to lobby negotiators at the meeting, to oppose the globalisation of the corporate agenda and to demonstrate that another world is possible.

The Hong Kong People's Alliance on the WTO (HKPA) was formed on 22 September 2004 to organise for the WTO Ministerial in December. There is a People's Action Week, a number of conferences and cultural events planned for the Ministerial. For more details and to keep updated, please visit the HKPA's website: <http://www.hkpa-wto.org/>.

If you or your organisation is considering going to the Ministerial in December, please note the following:

- NGO accreditation: The accreditation of NGOs wishing to attend the Ministerial is open until 29 July. To apply for NGO accreditation, please visit <https://meetings.wto.org/NGO/PreRegistration/ngohome.aspx?Language=E>
- Media accreditation: The accreditation of media wishing to attend the Ministerial occurs from 1 July – 15 November. To apply for media accreditation, please visit the WTO website: [www.wto.org](http://www.wto.org). There are quite strict criteria for who can qualify as 'bona fide' media. These criteria are at [http://www.wto.org/english/forums\\_e/media\\_e/criteria\\_accreditation\\_min\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/forums_e/media_e/criteria_accreditation_min_e.htm)

## **6. Reminder: AFTINET has moved to a new office**

AFTINET has moved to a new office. Please take note of our new address and phone number. From 25 June, you can find us at:

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