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1) IMF and World Bank Policies Under Fire from Economists and from April Washington Protests

Together the WTO, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank dominate world trade and financial arrangements. The IMF and the World Bank have imposed harsh programs for debt repayment on developing countries, involving rapid trade liberalisation, production for export at the expense of food security, labour market deregulation, privatisation and cuts in basic health and education services. Such policies imposed by the IMF immediately after the 1997 East Asian Economic Crisis worsened the crisis and were partially reversed after mass protests.

In March a scathing report on the IMF and World Bank was prepared by eminent economists Allan Meltzer and Jeffrey Sachs for the International Financial Institution Advisory Commission of the US Congress. The US is the chief funder of the IMF and the World Bank. The report recommends that the IMF should cease long term lending and cease imposing harsh repayment conditions, should use its existing resources to cancel all debts owed to it by the poorest countries, and should confine itself to short term emergency relief for currency crises. The report also recommends that the World bank cancel the debts of the poorest countries and provide grants rather than loans for poverty relief. For a summary by the authors see www.nationalpost.com/financialpost.asp?s2=fpcomment&f=000309/227238.html

The IMF and World Bank governing bodies are meeting in Washington on April 16-17. Debt cancellation is one of the demands of the Mobilisation for Global Justice, a broad coalition of churches, unions, environment and human rights groups which is organising a series of marches and rallies, seminars and conferences in Washington to call for fundamental changes to international financial institutions. For more information see www.a16.org

2) Jubilee 2000- Australian Government Should Drop the Debt

Jubilee 2000, one of the groups involved in the Washington protest, has organised rallies around Australia to urge our government to follow the example of the US, Canada, France Britain and Norway and begin the millennium by cancelling debt owed to it by the world's poorest countries. Petitions and letter writing kits are available from PO Box 289 Hawthorne VIC 3122 or the website < www.jubilee2000.org.au > .

There is also a campaign to put further debt cancellation back on the agenda for this year's meeting of the G8 governments in Tokyo in July. For more information email omerod@pop.ihug.com.au

3) Shadow Trade Minister on Tasmanian salmon and new WTO round

Senator Peter Cook has criticised the Federal government's acceptance of the WTO decision to outlaw Australian quarantine restrictions on the import of fresh salmon, arguing it should have appealed the decision. In a separate speech in London on March 28, Senator Cook also called for the WTO to address the issues of environment and labour standards, to address the effective exclusion of developing countries from negotiations and to find ways for their development priorities to be considered. However, he believes these issues should be addressed in the context of further liberalisation, and does not regard the delay in launching a new round of negotiations at Seattle represents a victory. Media releases available from Andrew.Leigh@aph.gov.au

4) Sign-On letter from Public Citizens Global Trade Watch and proposal for International Day of Action (date to be set)

After civil society and activists from around the world scored the fantastic victory in Seattle against the World Trade Organization (WTO) last year, the question we have all been asked is "where do we go from here?" How do we continue to build on and expand the momentum that we enjoy, and how do we broaden the movement and bring more people and organizations into it?

Last year we rallied under the slogan "No New Round - Turn Around". The international sign-on letter demanding a moratorium on further trade and investment negotiations through the WTO had more than 1500 groups signed on to it by the time of the Ministerial.

People representing a variety of country-based campaigns worldwide came together in March to strategize and discuss next steps. Like everyone, we were eager to find a way to discuss "next steps" with international allies. When we heard that several of the activists highly involved over the past three years in the campaigns against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) and WTO — from India, Canada, Malaysia, Mexico, Chile, Europe — were coming to the US for several other overlapping meetings, we reached out to colleagues from other countries — Philippines, Cameroon, Ghana, France, Ecuador, Japan, New Zealand — which were active in these past campaigns but would otherwise not be in the U.S. at that time.

At this strategy meeting, a consensus document — inspired by the success of the "No New Round, Turnaround" letter — was created with the goal of launching a new international NGO campaign. The document, attached & included in the body of the e-mail, is called: "WTO - Shrink or Sink! The Turn Around Agenda."

As with last year's successful international campaign, the "WTO - Shrink or Sink!" campaign aims to incorporate the approaches and issues of a variety of organizations and networks. It offers a fundamental critique of the WTO and the system of corporate managed trade that we are currently living under, and sets forth a set of demands on our governments to roll-back the power and authority of the WTO.

The idea is to pass this statement around and build up an even larger and more diverse

list of signatories than previous statements. With thanks to Friends of the Earth International for taking on this function last time, Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch has agreed (at least for now) to take responsibility for collecting the names of the groups who sign on. Some of the groups that helped draft the statement have already signed it, and we are hoping for many many more! All we are doing is keeping track of the names, so it is on everyone who gets this email to spread it around and find groups to sign on.

We should set an international Day of Action (for later this spring/summer) to launch the campaign with press events, teach-ins, demonstrations, etc. in cities and capitals around the world, similar to the September 15, 1999 Days of Action on the WTO around the world.

Here are the details for how an organization can sign the letter:

- 1) This is an organizational sign-on letter only. We will not be adding individuals to it.
- 2) In the subject line type in "Shrink or Sink signatory"
- 3) In the body of the e-mail list the organization and country (contact information such as address, phone & fax is also appreciated) that you are signing on. Those who wish should also mention how many people the organization represents.
- 4) Send the e-mail to mstrand@citizen.org
- 5) You can also sign the letter by going to www.tradewatch.org - click on WTO on the globe.

We will be sending out regular updates with the signatories. Please circulate this amongst your colleagues and networks.

WTO - Shrink or Sink! - The Turn Around Agenda

It's time to turn trade around. In November 1999, the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Third Ministerial Meeting in Seattle collapsed in spectacular fashion, in the face of unprecedented protest from people and governments around the world. We believe it is essential to use this moment as an opportunity to change course and develop an alternative, humane, democratically accountable and sustainable system of commerce that benefits all. This process entails rolling back the power and authority of the WTO.

The GATT Uruguay Round Agreements and the establishment of the WTO were proclaimed as a means of enhancing the creation of global wealth and prosperity and promoting the well-being of all people in all member states. In reality, however, The WTO has contributed to the concentration of wealth in the hands of the rich few; increasing poverty for the majority of the world's peoples, especially in third world countries; and unsustainable patterns of production and consumption.

The WTO and GATT Uruguay Round Agreements have functioned principally to pry open markets for the benefit of transnational corporations at the expense of national and local economies; workers, farmers, indigenous peoples, women and other social groups; health and safety; the environment; and animal welfare. In addition, the WTO system, rules and procedures are undemocratic, un-transparent and non-accountable and have operated to marginalize the majority of the world's people.

All this has taken place in the context of increasing global instability, the collapse of

national economies, growing inequity both between and within nations and increasing environmental and social degradation, as a result of the acceleration of the process of corporate globalization.

The governments which dominate the WTO, especially the United States, the European Union, Japan and Canada, and the transnational corporations which have benefitted from the WTO system have refused to recognize and address these problems. They are still intent on further liberalization, including through the expansion of the WTO, promoting free trade as a goal in itself. In reality, however, free trade is anything but “free”. The time has come to acknowledge the crises of the international trading system and its main administering institution, the WTO. We need to replace this old, unfair and oppressive trade system with a new, socially just and sustainable trading framework for the 21st Century.

We need to protect cultural, biological, economic and social diversity; introduce progressive policies to prioritize local economies and trade; secure internationally recognized economic, cultural, social and labor rights; and reclaim the sovereignty of peoples and national and sub-national democratic decision-making processes. In order to do this, we need new rules based on the principles of democratic control of resources, ecological sustainability, equity, cooperation and precaution.

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In light of the above, we make the following demands of our governments:

No WTO expansion

We reiterate our opposition to continued attempts to launch a new round or expand the WTO by bringing in new issues such as investment, competition, government procurement, biotechnology and accelerated tariff liberalization.

WTO Hands off: Protect Basic Social Rights and Needs

It is inappropriate and unacceptable for social rights and basic needs to be constrained by WTO rules. Thus WTO Agreements must not apply to issues critical to human or planetary welfare, such as food and water, basic social services, health and safety, and animal protection. Inappropriate encroachment by trade rules in such areas has already resulted in campaigns on genetically modified organisms, old growth forests, domestically prohibited goods and predatory tobacco marketing.

Gut GATS: Protect Basic Social Services:

In particular, areas such as health, education, energy and other basic human services must not be subject to international free trade rules. In the WTO General Agreement on Services (GATS), the principle of “progressive liberalization” and the implications of foreign investment in service sectors has already led to severe problems.

Take TRIPS Out: Restore National Patent Protection Systems

We demand the removal of the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPS) from the WTO. There is no basis for inclusion of intellectual property claims in a trade agreement. Additionally, the TRIPS agreement promotes monopoly by transnational corporations; prevents access to essential medicines and other goods; leads to private appropriation of knowledge and life forms; undermines biodiversity; and keeps poorer countries from increasing their levels of social and economic welfare and developing their technological capacity.

No Patents on Life

The patenting of life forms must be prohibited in all national and international regimes.

Food is a Basic Human Right

Measures taken to promote and protect food security and sovereignty, subsistence farming, humane farming practices and sustainable agriculture must be exempt from international free trade rules. There must be a prohibition on export subsidies and other forms of dumping of agricultural products, especially on third world countries. The trading system must not undermine the livelihood of peasants, small farmers, artesinal fishers and indigenous peoples.

No Investment Liberalization

The WTO Trade Related Investment Measures (TRIMS) Agreement must be eliminated. All countries and especially third world countries must have the right to use policy options (such as local content policy) to increase the capacity of their own productive sectors, especially small and medium enterprises. Obviously, the TRIMS review must not be used to extend the investment issue in WTO.

Fair Trade: Special and Differential Treatment

Special and differential rights for third world countries must be recognized, expanded, and operationalized in the world trading system. This is to take into account the weak position of third world countries in the international trading system. Without the enforcement of special and differential rights, there can be no possibility of third world countries benefitting from world trade.

Prioritize Agreements on Social Rights and the Environment

Actions taken to implement multilateral agreements dealing with the environment, health, development, human rights, safety, indigenous peoples' rights, food security, women's rights, workers' rights and animal welfare cannot be challenged at or undermined by the WTO.

Democratize Decision-Making

People must have the right to self-determination and the right to know and decide on international commercial commitments. Among other things, this requires that decision-making processes in negotiations and enforcement at international commercial bodies be democratic, transparent and inclusive. The WTO operates in a secretive, exclusionary manner that shuts out most third world country Members and the public. It is dominated by a few powerful governments acting on behalf of their corporate elites.

Dispute the System

The WTO dispute settlement system is unacceptable. It enforces an illegitimate system of unfair rules and operates with undemocratic procedures. It also usurps the rulemaking and legislative role of sovereign nations and local governments.

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A socially just international trade system will also require change outside the WTO. Given the attacks by multinational corporations and governments on basic workers rights; the reversal of the gains of workers' struggles; the undermining of job security; and the race-to-the-bottom in wages, workers rights must be strengthened worldwide.

Also, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the regional development

banks must write off 100% of the debts owed to them by poor countries. The use of structural adjustment conditionality to force trade liberalization in third world countries and elsewhere must be stopped. Governments must negotiate, through the UN system and with full democratic participation, a binding agreement to ensure that corporate conduct is socially and environmentally responsible and democratically accountable.

Conclusions and Consequences

We are committed to a sustainable, socially just and democratically accountable trade system. Thus, as a first step, we demand that our governments implement the changes listed in this document in order to roll back the power and authority of the WTO and turn trade around.

We commit ourselves to mobilize people within our countries to fight for these demands and to defy the unjust policies of the WTO. We will also support other people and countries who do so with international solidarity campaigns.

We pledge to carry the Spirit of Seattle around the world.

Signed by:

Australia - Friends of the Earth

Chile - Programa Chile Sustentable
Fundacion Sociedades Sustentables

Finland - Finnish NGO Campaign on WTO
Friends of the Earth Finland
Finnish Association of World Shops
The Communist Party of Finland
Socialist Association

France - Droits devant!!
Ecoropa
Institut pour la relocalisation de l'économie
Observatoire de la mondialisation

Holland - Corporate Europe Observatory
Towards a Different Europe

Japan - Friends of the Earth Japan

Malaysia - Third World Network

New Zealand - Friends of the Earth

Phillippines - Legal rights and Natural Resources Center-Kasama sa Kalikasan/Friends of the Earth Philippines Ibon Foundation
Bayan-Phillippines (New Patriotic Alliance)

UK - Friends of the Earth (England, Wales and North Ireland)

U.S. - Animal Welfare Institute
Alliance for Democracy

Bay Area Jubilee 2000 Coalition
Center for Economic Policy and Research
Economic Justice Now
Economic Justice Now Africa Committee
Friends of the Earth
Humane Society, U.S.
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Public Citizen
Society of Animal Protective Legislation
United for a Fair Economy

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