



Level 3, Suite 3B, 110 Kippax St
Surry Hills, NSW, 2010
Phone: 02 9212 7242
Fax: 02 9211 1407
Email: campaign@aftinet.org.au
ACN 097 603 131
ABN 83 659 681 462
www.aftinet.org.au

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If you would like to contribute to the Bulletin, please contact us at campaign@aftinet.org.au
or Phone (02) 9212 7242 Fax (02) 9211 1407

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1. World Trade Organisation Update

The next WTO Ministerial meeting, due November 30 to December 2, is more about shoring up confidence that the Doha Round can move forward, and will not directly negotiate on Doha. A significant concern is that many side meetings will happen in Geneva, as has happened on the sidelines at the recent ASEAN gatherings and in the led up to APEC. Alongside this is the increased use of mini-Ministerials. Whilst these have both occurred before, they have now become very openly the driver for movement on Doha and GATS. Reports indicate that these meetings are being used to persuade the least developed countries (LDCs) and other developing countries that some development aims have been met. It appears that Brazil and India are positioning to ensure that they are not blamed if the Doha round is not finalised by the end of 2010. They believe that the Doha round could be of some benefit on balance to their economies, if the USA and Europe live up to their development promise.

Resources to access and keep tabs on all of these side meetings are a problem for the NGO groups attending Geneva. Significant concerns exist that LDC's and developing nations will be isolated in side meetings and a bit of bullying may occur. The fear is that this will result in significant movement on the side, undermining the formal WTO processes.

The Our World Is Not For Sale (OWINFS) group is coordinating peaceful actions and NGO monitoring at the Geneva Ministerial. The number of protesters is expected to be down on past actions due to the climate change meetings in Copenhagen. The theme for the campaign will basically be "WTO -Turnback": It is no longer acceptable to move forward with or maintain this neo-liberal trade agenda and the WTO must return to the starting point. (OWINFS website: <http://www.ourworldisnotforsale.org>)

The Global Financial Crisis (GFC) has given a new impetus to the push for Doha to be concluded and the USA is pushing for GATS to become a key to this. The claim is that agreement on the Doha round is a way for the world economy to get out of the GFC. The basic US claim, which is gaining some traction, is that liberalisation of trade in Services will result in a much more significant increase in the size of the world economy than liberalisation in Agriculture and Manufacturing combined, giving it the boost it needs after the GFC. Australia has joined with the US in linking GATS to Doha and arguing for a major shift on trade in services by the developing world. The US now refuse to move on Doha unless there are major concessions for Trade in Services.

India has responded to the US pressure on trade in services by calling for movement on the GATS negotiations around liberalisation of the movement of professionals. Both Brazil and India are maintaining that Agriculture and NAMA modalities need to be resolved prior to movement on Services. In this, and other actions, India and Brazil may simply be positioning themselves to avoid blame if the new set of talks fall over like they did in 2008.

In further positive developments, in the last week of October, Brazil and China have led developing countries in rejecting a proposal from Canada, which is supported by the USA, Australia and Japan, aimed at having key developing countries clarify market access concessions on services ahead of the agreed time frames. The rejection confirms that developing nations are holding to the existing timetable for agricultural and NAMA modalities to be completed prior to more clarity being provided on services.

2. Pacific Update

At the August 2009 Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), held in Cairns, it was agreed to commence negotiations for the Pacific Agreement for Closer Economic Relations Plus (PACER Plus). The first Trade Officials and Ministers meeting to discuss a roadmap for negotiating, phasing and consultations was held in Brisbane on 21st and 22nd October 2009 (FTOMM) and 23rd and 24th October 2009 (FTMM) (Note: The location was moved at the last minute).

The Brisbane meeting confirmed that funding from Australia and NZ has been put in place to “support” the creation of the Office of the Chief Trade Advisor (OCTA). The appointee is Dr Christopher Noonan, an academic at Auckland University and trade lawyer. He has previously been involved in giving advice to the PIF countries around the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) and the highly disliked European Union - Pacific Economic Partnership Agreement (EUP-EPA).

The outcomes from the Brisbane meeting sets out a loose timeframe for preliminary negotiations, limits the number of meetings to take place to 3 officials and 1 ministers meeting and calls for national Consultations. The first Officials meeting is scheduled for the first quarter of 2010, with the Ministerial meeting to be in April/May 2010. This appears to be a win for the PIF countries and the various NGO groups because it slows the progress of PACER Plus. There remain significant concerns as there is no limit on the agenda and content of these meetings, which means that they could still try to cover an unrealistic work load that is too great for the capacity of the PIF countries. Capacity constraints are acknowledged by all parties and will continue to exist. A negative outcome is that preliminary negotiations will continue to go ahead in parallel with national consultations, despite calls for the national consultations to occur first.

There have been a number of strong Pacific voices that have come out against the free trade agenda of PACER Plus before the August meeting. They continue their opposition, and pushed forward alternate approaches in the lead up to the October meetings. AFTINET continues to work with them. Recently AFTINET assisted in organising a radio interview, prior to the Brisbane PACER Plus Ministerial meeting, with ABC Radio’s PACBEAT program, for a representative of the Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG). Subsequently a follow-up interview with AFTINET took place on the outcomes of the Ministerial meeting. The following are the links to the stories and interviews:

PANG - <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/pacbeat/stories/200910/s2722093.htm>

AFTINET - <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/pacbeat/stories/200910/s2725067.htm>

3. Events: 10 Years Since WTO in Seattle - Fundraiser
Ten years since the WTO in Seattle - when the people demanded fair trade

Thursday November 12, 2009, 6.00pm
Sydney Mechanics School of Arts
Level 1, 280 Pitt St, Sydney 2000

Delicious vegetarian food, images of Seattle, raffle prizes include DVD of the feature film *Battle in Seattle*, starring Charlize Theron. Drinks at bar.



Speakers:

Anna Reynolds, advisor to Greens Leader Senator Bob Brown, recalls her experience of Seattle as an environment activist.

Dr Patricia Ranald, Co-Convener of the Australian Fair Trade & Investment Network: the WTO today and what we can do for fair trade now.

Price: \$20 per person

(please RSVP on form below to assist with numbers for catering)

AFTINET Ten years since the WTO in Seattle fundraiser RSVP Form

Drinks available at bar

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ P / Code _____

Email: _____

Please book ____ places at \$20 per person

You can pay by cheque, money order or credit card. Cheques should be payable to 'AFTINET Ltd'.

I enclose a cheque / money order for \$

Or please charge \$ to my (please circle) Visa Mastercard

Card Number: _____ Expiry Date:
___ / ___

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____

Post cheques and / or completed forms to AFTINET, Level 3, 110 Kippax St, Surry Hills NSW 2010.

Fax: 9211 1407. Phone: 9212 7242