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Australia must reject world trade deal

“The new offer on the table at these talks undermines any notion that this deal is made to benefit developing countries” commented Fair Trade Advocate Adam Wolfenden today.

The World Trade Organisation is currently holding a Mini-Ministerial on the latest round of global trade talks. The negotiations, which started in 2001, were dubbed the ‘development’ round for their proposed aim to support developing countries.

Negotiations have peaked with seven countries, Australia, the US, the EU, Japan, Brazil, China, and India meeting overnight to work out the most contentious issues of negotiations. The WTO Director General, Pascal Lamy, has now produced a new agreement text that reflects those negotiations.

“These new offers still make a farce of these negotiations. The US is still allowed to double its current level of domestic subsidies, while developing countries are forced to slash protections for manufacturing industries and weaken their ability to respond to the food crisis,” stated Mr Wolfenden.

“This whole process has been completely non-transparent and undemocratic. Seven countries are negotiating the terms of trade for 152 countries, now developing countries have been given a text and asked to decide on it within days. This is completely ridiculous,” continued Mr Wolfenden.

“All of this is happening with the US still unable to commit to any outcome of these negotiations. Until the US has authority to negotiate, other countries should not be pressured into committing to more unfair global trade” said Mr Wolfenden.

President Bush no longer has Congressional authority to commit to any trade agreements. The US Congress currently has that authority and any agreement that results from these talks would be up to Congress after the upcoming presidential elections.

“What’s on the table is a bad deal. Bad for developing countries and bad for Australia. Trade Minister Crean must reject this deal” concluded Mr Wolfenden.

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