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World Trade talks wont address development or global crises

“Mr Crean should be lobbying for the World Trade Organisation to follow its own advice and take a break from pushing forward agreements that will harm developing countries and remove policy space for all governments”, commented Fair Trade Advocate Adam Wolfenden.

Today marks the first day of World Trade Organisation talks that are the ‘make or break’ stage of the Doha negotiations, dubbed the ‘Development’ round for their proposed aim to support developing countries.

“Developing countries are being asked to sign an agreement that demands more from them than from industrialised countries. Everyone can see that there is an imbalance in the negotiations. Even the World Bank is saying this deal is a dud for developing countries” continued Mr Wolfenden.

The World Bank has forecast US\$16 Billion in national income gains for developing countries but offset by a loss for those countries of US\$63 Billion in tariff revenues.

Negotiations have been stalled for years over disagreements in the level of domestic subsidies given to farmers in industrialised countries, the level of tariffs applied to manufactured goods imported into developing countries, and the strength of the mechanism for developing countries to respond to food import surges.

“Despite the current food, financial and environmental crises, governments are being asked to reduce their own role in responding to these crises. These talks aim to remove regulation on financial services and weaken the mechanisms that developing countries have to protect food security, two important tools for addressing the current crises,” stated Mr Wolfenden.

“The WTO-commissioned Warwick Report has itself called for the WTO to take a time-out and reflect on what it is actually achieving. Given the lack of negotiating authority for the US President and the fact that any agreement would be decided by the US Congress next year, the WTO is perfectly placed for some reflection,” concluded Mr Wolfenden.

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