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MEDIA RELEASE

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Fair Trade celebration – Doha deadline passes

“Today fair trade supporters celebrate the failure to conclude the disastrous Doha Round of negotiations in the World Trade Organisation in time to use George Bush’s current Trade Promotion Authority,” said Michele Freeman, Trade Policy Officer with the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network.

“In order for the Doha Round to get through the US congress, an agreement needed to be reached by March 31st, and that date has passed without an agreement even in sight. WTO Director General, Pascal Lamy, has been caught in an outright lie claiming that negotiators had until June 30th ‘to grasp the window of openness’ for talks to conclude,” stated Ms Freeman.

President Bush’s Trade Promotion Authority, which gives him the authority to make trade deals that can be sent to Congress for a simple yes-no vote with no amendments, does in fact expire at the end of June, but because Bush must give *90 days notice of intent to sign* an agreement, *after* an agreement is completed, March 31st is the real deadline.

“WTO Director General, Pascal Lamy, has been running a pressure campaign with this deceptive June 30th deadline, trying to get developing countries to make more concessions in the already highly unfair WTO negotiations,” explained Ms Freeman.

“Developing countries dub the Doha Development Round of negotiations as ‘Everything but Development Round’ because, as the 2005 World Bank Report states, under the likely Doha scenario the Middle East, Bangladesh, almost all of Africa and Mexico, would face net losses,” explained Ms Freeman

“It is with great relief that we witness the passing of this deadline with no conclusion to this unfair agreement in sight,” Ms Freeman continued.

“The failure to conclude the Doha Round in time for the expiry of Bush’s current Trade Promotion Authority should be seen as an opportunity to develop a new vision for global trade - a global trading system based on satisfying the economic and development interests of the majority. We need a trade system developed in the context of democracy, human rights, sovereignty, and environmental sustainability,” said Ms Freeman.

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