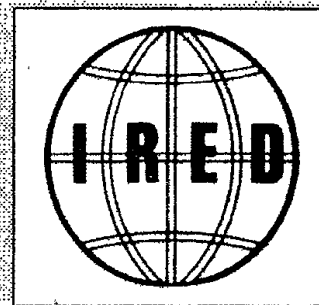


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EDITORIAL

FROM SEATTLE TO DOHA

The Multilateral Trading Agreements as negotiated through the World Trade Organisation (WTO), when it came into being 5 years ago is yet to be fully embraced by the developing countries. The situation is more real in Africa where countries are getting poorer. About 300million people in Africa live on less than US\$1 per day. This is precisely the case because the issues brought to the agenda by African countries in collaboration with the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) and other southern countries are never given due consideration. Africa was said to be continuously loosing more US\$70 billion due to limited markets access between 1970 and 1995, sufficient to pay all its official debt of US\$260 billion in four years and continue on a sustainable path.

Presently it is loosing more due to increasing tariffs and the non-tariff barriers that restrict the entry into the rich industrial Northern Countries. Africa has opened its market through Economic Structural Adjustment Programs (ESAP) as advocated by the World Bank and IMF. It is expected that similar conditions should be reciprocated as agreed in the conclusion of Uruguay Round in Marakesh. Africa has removed subsidies for most of its products including Agriculture. Unfortunately, the western countries are spending US\$360billion per year subsidising Agriculture, this translates to 1billion Dollars per day.

This promotes unfair trading practices as their agricultural products when exported or dumped to Africa undermines agriculture and food security.

The WTO unfortunately has failed to correct these anomalies and to ensure the recommendations to provide preferential treatment to African products into Western World, Debt Cancellation, Capacity Building to enhance the quality and strategies of negotiations, trade facilitation e.t.c were implemented.

It was unfortunate, these issues were not addressed in Doha. The Trade Ministers agreed to a New Round when Singapore issues had not been tackled. If the Tariffs and Non-Tariff Barriers were reduced, Africa could increase its market share from 2% to 14% of the total global trade. This is the commitment that African people would like to see from the industrial countries so as to benefit from trade and reduce the liability of its 300 million poverty stricken people to less than 100 million through productive work that is rewarded. Africa must create wealth through production, processing and marketing its products to the industrial Northern Nations. It must also improve on infrastructure not only road and railway network but Information Technology Systems to raise it from 2% telephone penetration to more than 10%.

*By John Mwaniki
IRED DIRECTOR*

We call on our Ministers, delegations and governments to reject the draft Ministerial Declaration of 27 October as the basis of a Declaration. Instead, Ministers should boldly table their own alternative texts reflecting the interests of their people and their countries in the various key paragraphs and sections.

In particular we call on the Ministers to reject paragraphs 20-23 on launching negotiations on the new issues and instead replace them with the decision either to continue the study in the working groups on these issues, or to close down these working groups as these issues do not belong to the WTO and negotiations would threaten the future of developing countries. Also, we support the proposal by many developing countries to change paragraph 16: instead of negotiations on industrial tariffs, a study process should be initiated.

We call on the Ministers to instruct that the TRIPS agreement be drastically revised to meet the public's concerns; including that countries can exempt food, medicines and the agriculture and pharmaceutical sectors from patentability. Other problems arising from imbalances in existing WTO rules and their implementation must also be addressed effectively as a priority.

We also oppose the section on organisation and management of the work programme (paras 38-45 of the draft Declaration) as it contains many elements of a New Round (such as a single undertaking and a Trade Negotiating Committee) with a big agenda of negotiations on many new issues.

Instead the Ministers at Doha should adopt a simple text stating that the future work programme will be conducted under the General Council's supervision and a progress report will be submitted to the 5th Ministerial Conference.

We also demand that the Doha Ministerial Conference be conducted in a fair, transparent and inclusive manner. We call on the developed countries and the Secretariat not to persist with the old and discredited methods of manipulation, including the "Green Room" process of small group meetings.

We urge the Ministers of developing countries to refuse to be intimidated by any manipulative tactics and attempts by developed countries aided by the Secretariat to bulldoze through proposals that are a threat to development and people's interests. The decisions taken will determine the future of our countries. Therefore we urge that the Ministers and officials take a firm stand to defend the public and national interests of their countries.

This statement was first drawn up by some participants of a workshop on Trade, World Trade Organisation (WTO) and Human Development in Penang, Malaysia on 2-3, November 2001.

This statement is signed and endorsed by the following organisations: -

Third World Network;-
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA),
Assembly of the Poor (Thailand),
Gonoshasthaya Kendra (Bangladesh),
FOCUS on the Global South (Thailand),
Korean House for International Solidarity Korea(KHIS)
Project for Ecological Recovery (PER), (Thailand),
Thai NGO Coordinating Committee on Development,
Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) (Malaysia),
TERAS (Malaysia),
Yayasan Lembaga Konsumen Indonesia,
CONTENTD (Philippines),
Tebtebba Foundation (Philippines),
Bayan Nuna (Philippines),
National Working Group on Patent Laws, (India),
Action Aid Pakistan,
IBON Foundation (Philippines),
Institute for Global Justice (Indonesia),
Consumers' Association of Penang (Malaysia)

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