

June 25, 2012

Dear Pascal Lamy,

We are writing to strongly object to the recently formed “WTO Panel on Defining the Future of Trade.” This panel, more than half of which is composed by representatives of the business sector, does not have the global legitimacy of the stakeholders – those who will be impacted by the future of trade negotiations within the WTO – to be able to propose a legitimate path forward for future WTO negotiations.

First, we find the composition of the panel to be extremely biased in favor of the corporate sector, with inadequate representation of civil society. One NGO, particularly one of the characteristics of CUTS, would not be able to provide a full perspective of the views of NGOs, including many of the signatories below which have been involved in the issues of the WTO since before its inception. Although we observe the participation of the International Trade Union Confederation, there are no representatives from other important civil society groups, such as farmers, indigenous peoples, women’s rights groups, consumer organizations, the international human rights community, or the global health community.

As well, the diversity of the membership of the WTO is extremely ill-represented on this panel. Of the 12 panelists, only one is from Africa and only one is from Latin America. Despite the importance of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the current negotiations, there are no representatives from the LDCs on the panel.

Additionally, we are extremely dismayed that the one global institution focused on ensuring that trade does serve development goals, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), was excluded from this panel. The exclusion of UNCTAD only serves to provide further evidence that the WTO Secretariat intends to use the panel to formulate a path for future negotiations that excludes the very concept of development from the WTO’s goal of expanding trade.

The WTO is, by statute, a member-driven organization. Thus, any initiatives to move forward regarding future negotiations should come from the membership. We find the process of the composition of the panel to have been autocratic and not in keeping with the rhetoric of a member-driven organization.

We are also extremely cognizant of the fact that a similar panel, the so-called Leutweiler report commissioned by then Director-General of the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), Arthur Dunkel, also lacked legitimacy, but was nevertheless utilized to crowd out a truly member-driven process with stakeholder participation, which would have led to a much more development-oriented result.

Thus, we call on you to dissolve this “panel”, given that any proposals which emanate from it would lack legitimacy. Instead, we call on you to work with the membership to identify the changes to the existing WTO and ongoing negotiations that are necessary to ensure that governments have the policy space to use trade for sustainable and inclusive development, and to regulate in the public interest.

Sincerely,

11.11.11, Belgium

Africa Trade Network

Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL), Philippines

All Nepal Peasants' Federation (ANPFa-Nepal)

Alternative Information & Development Centre, South Africa

Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)

Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network (AFTINET)

Bangladesh Adivasi Samity

Bangladesh Kishani Sabha

Bangladesh Krishok Federation

Bharat Krishak Samaj (BKS), India

Caribbean Policy Development Centre (CPDC)

Confederation of Labor and Allied Social Services (CLASS), Philippines

Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO), Belgium

Council of Canadians

Fairwatch, Italy

Focus on the Global South

Foro Ciudadano de Participación por la Justicia y los Derechos Humanos (FOCO) – Argentina

Friends of the Earth, United States

IDEALS, Philippines

Indonesia for Global Justice (IGJ)

International Forum on Globalization, United States

KEPA, Finland

Labour, Health and Human Rights Development Centre, Nigeria

National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS)

National Labour and Economic Development Institute (NALEDI), South Africa

New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI), India

Oakland Institute, United States

Pacific Network on Globalization (PANG)

Public Citizen, United States

Red Mexicana de Acción Frente al Libre Comercio (RMALC), Mexico

Solidarite, France

South Asian Peasant Coalition (SAPC)

Third World Network-Africa

Third World Network

War on Want, UK

World Development Movement, UK

Worldview, The Gambia