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 WTO News: The Road to Seattle - Issue VII September 10, 1999

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EVENTS ON THE ROAD TO SEATTLE

- The Commerce Dept. will continue its free trade tour in Kansas City and Wichita on Sept. 24. Planning for actions around their visit is already underway, but more Kansas contacts are needed. Please forward your contacts to <mailto:mstrand@citizen.org> or <mailto:alesha@citizen.org> ASAP.
- Global Trade Watch's book on the WTO, 200+ pages later, will be available at the end of the month. An October promotions tour is planned. For more information, visit <http://www.tradewatch.org>
- American Lands Alliance is sponsoring a forest issues lobby week, Oct. 11-15. For more information, contact Antonia Juhasz <mailto:antonia@americanlands.org>
- Biodiversity Action Network is sponsoring a forests and trade seminar in Washington, DC on September 27, 1999. For more information, contact: Juliette Moussa or Philip Myers at <mailto:bionet@igc.org>
- 180/Movement for Democracy and Education is sponsoring campus teach-ins on the WTO, Oct. 5-7. Contact Erin Clare Quinn at 608-262-9036 for more information.
- CFED has released a report on WTO issues targeted to local public officials. Bob Stumberg is also working on a new amicus coalition

around the Massachusetts Burma case. Contact him about either of these via the Georgetown Univ. switchboard.

- 50 Years Is Enough is sponsoring a conference ("No Sweat, No Debt") in DC, Sept. 23-26.

- Cornell Program on Dairy Markets & Policy is sponsoring a workshop focusing on dairy issues as they relate to liberalized trade and the WTO, October 18 - 19. For more information, visit <http://cpdmp.cornell.edu>

- Conference: Coordinating Challenges to Corporate Globalization Chicago, November 12-14, 1999 sponsored by The Preamble Center. For more information, contact: Terry Provance <mailto:provance@preamble.org>, phone: 202-265-3263 x232 or Matthew Siegel <mailto:siegelm@preamble.org>, phone: 202-265-3263 x330

REVIEW OF EVENTS DURING THE MINISTERIAL WEEK

This is an incomplete list -- and will keep growing as November draws near. If you are aware of any events being schedule for the week of the Ministerial, please contact Margrete Strand-Ranges at Public Citizen at <mailto:mstrand@citizen.org>, or Renske van Staveren at IATP at <mailto:rvanstaveren@iatp.org>.

For a great list of events during the week, visit: <http://www.ictsd.org/html/seattlecalendar.htm>

Earth Justice is planning on producing a daily newspaper during the week of the Ministerial with updates, news, etc. For more information or to send articles, contact Tom Turner at <mailto:tturner@earthjustice.org>

The week of the Ministerial will be kicked off by a large two-day Teach-In sponsored by the International Forum on Globalization. Friday, November 26, and Saturday, November 27 at Seattle's Benaroya Symphony Hall. For more information about the Teach-In, visit the IFG's website at <http://www.ifg.org>, or contact the IFG Event Coordinator, Shawnee Hoover, at 415-771-3394, <mailto:shoover@ifg.org>.

Many NGOs are organizing each day of the Ministerial around themes.

Monday, November 29 -- Environment & Health. A morning town hall will showcase 5-7 people speaking to a panel of NGO/labor leaders and elected officials about how trade agreements have impacted them personally. This will be followed by a midday street action and afternoon breakout sessions. Health groups and international environmental NGOs are wanted to join the planning group. Contact Mark Vallianatos (<mailto:MVallianatos@foe.org>) or Dan Seligman (<mailto:dan.seligman@sierraclub.org>) with ideas or to join.

On Monday evening, the Seattle Host Organization will have its opening event at the Expo Center. For more information on this and other SHO activities, visit their website at <http://www.wtoseattle.org/>

Tuesday, November 30 -- Labor/Human Rights. This is the day of the big civil society action, as well as the mass nonviolent action (led by Ruckus Society and others). The AFL-CIO is still collecting commitments from unions, and has several full-time organizers working on the project.

SHO will be hosting a working session on E-Commerce this day, and this will be the first day of the WTO working session.

Wednesday, December 1 -- Women, Democracy, & Development -- see the article included in this issue of WTO News for more information on this event.

A "No Patents on Life" event will also be taking place on Wednesday, addressing biotechnology, the TRIPS & SPS agreements and other issues related to patenting and the WTO; at Plymouth Congregational Church. For more information on this event, contact Phil Bereano at <mailto:phil@uwtc.washington.edu>

SHO will be addressing agriculture & labor in its working sessions this day.

Thursday, December 2 -- Food & Agriculture Day -- see the article in this issue on planning for this event.

SHO will address Trade in Services and the Environment on this day, and will also host its closing event at the Seattle Center.

Friday, December 3 -- the WTO has not scheduled any working sessions for this day. NGOs are beginning to organize around the issues of corporate accountability.

HOW FOOD, FARM & AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATIONS CAN GET INVOLVED

How to Get Involved in the WTO Ministerial Week

Food, farm and agriculture organizations that are interested in having a presence in Seattle can do so in a number of ways, in addition to whatever meetings/events you are planning independently.

First, plan on being at Food & Agriculture Day (Thursday, December

2nd). This will be a full day of speakers, strategy sharing workshops, etc. with a focus directly on agriculture in the WTO. There are several ways organizations and individuals can become involved. We will be making tables available for groups wishing to present materials at the United Methodist Church, where the morning's activities will be held. Please contact Renske van Staveren (contact information below) for more information on tabling.

There will be a morning press breakfast which will be a time for the media to meet and interview farmers from around the world who can best express how trade liberalization has impacted farming and food production in their countries. Several speakers will be identified as experts in this area, with a roster of additional speakers available to the press. This will also be an informal opportunity for farmers to connect with other farmers. Contact Renske to be placed on the available speakers list.

A mid-day rally is also being planned, specifics to be announced as we secure venues, speakers, etc. The focus will be positive -- options for consumers which are "fair trade" and demands to keep those options in place. This will be an excellent opportunity for organizations working on alternative models of agriculture production, distribution, etc. to come out and have your voices heard -- bio-regional alternatives, co-ops, fair trade coalitions, etc.

The Fair Trade Fair! A Festival of Grassroots Globalization Alternatives. Global Exchange is interested in working together with numerous Fair Trade organizations to support a fair which would showcase the best of grassroots globalizations alternatives. This event will be held in Seneca Hall of the Town Hall building, a 5 minute walk from the Convention Center where the WTO will be meeting. For more information contact: Deborah James, Fair Trade Director, Global Exchange, 415.558.8682 x245 -- deborah@globalexchange.org

If your organization is interested in presenting a workshop -- please submit a one-page outline to Renske van Staveren describing the session. The descriptions should include the following:

- Full description of workshop including speakers, issue areas, etc.
- Identify budget for printing, publicity, etc.
- Ideally the workshop would not be US-focused but global in nature, supported by an international partner

Renske will then work with the local host committee to find space for your workshop, and the event will be publicized along with all other agriculture-related events during the week. If you are already planning a meeting or event during the week -- please let Renske know so we can get the word out!

Contact Renske van Staveren at: rvanstaveren@iatp.org or 612-870-3423 (phone), 612-870-4846 (fax)

FAIR TRADE FAIR PLANNED FOR WTO MINISTERIAL WEEK

This from Deborah James at Global Exchange. For more information on the

Fair, contact Deboarh at: 415.558.8682 x245,
mailto:deborah@globalexchange.org

Dear Fair Traders,

We have an exciting proposal we would like your feedback on. It's the Fair Trade Fair: A Festival of Grassroots Globalization Alternatives. We have rented a building ONE BLOCK AWAY from the Convention Center where the WTO meeting will be held during the week of November 27-December 3. Global Exchange is interested in working together with numerous Fair Trade organizations to support a fair which would showcase the best of grassroots globalizations alternatives. We're talking booths selling fair trade products and networking ideas to promote OUR vision of trade - Fair Not "Free".

WOMEN'S ORGANIZING FOR THE SEATTLE MINISTERIAL

This from Alexandra Spieldoch at Global Women's Project, Center of Concern, mailto:aspieldoch@coc.org

As many of you may know, NGO Organizing group has designated December 1 as women/gender, development and sovereignty day. A small group of women in Washington, DC has facilitated the forming of an international committee of women to plan this day. The committee is open to anyone working on trade issues who is interested in getting involved and it is still in its initial staging. If you want to be part of the committee or would like more information on NGO women's organizing for Seattle, contact Alexandra Spieldoch. The committee had their first international conference call and with great energy have begun to put together a plan for the day which will include briefing sessions, panels and strategy sessions. This day is open to all who will be attending the Seattle events.

Maria Riley is moderating a closed listserv for accredited women's NGOs to organize and strategize for a women's caucus during the official activities. Accredited women's NGOs can contact Maria Riley to get added to the listserv.

Diverse Women for Diversity will be hosting several events in conjunction with the upcoming WTO Ministerial in Seattle. Shalini sends this bulletin from the Secretariat in New Delhi:

DIVERSE WOMEN FOR DIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL MEETING AT SEATTLE
from 29th November 1999 - 1st December 1999

29th NOVEMBER 1999: FOOD FESTIVAL (By Invitation only)
30th NOVEMBER 1999: DIVERSE WOMEN GLOBAL ISSUES DAY (By Invitation except for Diverse Women members)

30th NOVEMBER 1999 EVENING EVENT: This is open for all women
1st DECEMBER 1999: First Half - DIVERSE WOMEN AMERICAS DAY (By
Invitation except for Diverse Women members)
Second Half - DIVERSE WOMEN MEETING WITH OTHER WOMEN & WOMEN ACTIVISTS
(Open Session)

SEPTEMBER 15: DAY OF ACTION AGAINST THE WTO!

This from Margrete Strand-Rangnes at Public Citizen
mailto:mstrand@citizen.org

Mark your calendar for the international Day of Action against the World Trade Organization (WTO), September 15, 1999. There will be simultaneous press conferences around the world, call-in campaigns to members of Parliaments/Congress, protests, hearings and teach-ins etc., to launch the international campaign against a "New Round" in Seattle.

We will also release the international sign-on letter (included in this e-mail). The letter now has 800 organizations signed on to it - we are shooting for 1000 by September the 15th, and we need your help to circulate it amongst your networks and contacts. The letter has been translated into Spanish and French, and you can find these versions at <http://www.onelist.com/shareddir/StopWTORound/>). If your organization would like to sign the letter, send an e-mail to Ronnie Hall at Friends of the Earth, UK (mailto:ronnieh@foe.co.uk).

Start planning this day now, and stay tuned for more information about events being organized near you. As we get closer to the day, we will circulate e-mails with information about the events that are being organized in different countries and cities. Please e-mail us your plans so that we can compile a masterlist of activities. We will also circulate a list of national contacts for the day.

Margrete Strand
Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, US
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September 15, 1999
International Day of Action against the World Trade Organization (WTO)
NO NEW ROUND - TURN AROUND!

Join tens of thousands of activists around the world in a day of action to oppose expansion of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The WTO is a powerful, undemocratic global commerce agency which imposes a regime of corporate managed trade. In its five years record, the WTO has consistently been used to attack national and local social and environmental safeguards. For example, the U.S. has already changed the Clean Air Act rules to comply with WTO demands.

Top negotiators from WTO's 135 member countries are meeting in Seattle, WA in late November 1999 to set the WTO's future agenda. Some of the most eager proponents of the WTO are calling for an ambitious new "Millennium Round" of negotiations including issues like a global free logging agreement and an MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investment) in

the WTO. On the agenda is also a further de-regulation of agriculture and services (including health services and education).

Enough is enough! In its five years of existence, the WTO has proved to be a disaster for democracy, workers and the environment. Rather than expand this flawed organization we need a turn-around!

On September 15, take action and let people know that you oppose any attempts to broaden the scope and power of the WTO. Here's what you can do:

* Call your Member of Congress and both Senators. Urge them to oppose the launch of a new round of WTO negotiations in Seattle that would expand the power of the WTO and to instead pressure the Clinton Administration to endorse an assessment of WTO's record to date so we can identify ways to change international trade and investment rules to promote fair trade and sustainable development. Call the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121 or toll-free at 1-888- 449-3511.

* Call the U.S. negotiators and tell them why they must oppose the "Millennium Round" proposal and why we must conduct an assessment of the WTO's performance to date. The U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) is the agency in charge of the negotiations. Call USTR's Charlene Barshefsky at 202-395-6890 (fax: 202-395-4549). You should also call the White House's John Podesta at 202-456-1414, as well as vice-President Al Gore at 202-456-1111.

Get all your friends and neighbors to call as well!

Come to Seattle for the Ministerial (Nov. 29 through Dec. 3)! Activists from all around the world will gather in Seattle for teach-ins, street festivities, debates, cultural activities, protests and more! Check out <http://www.seattletwto.net/> for more information on accommodation/schedule of events/other arrangements or call 1-877-STOP-WTO (786-7986).

FOR THOSE OF YOU IN SEATTLE...

This from Steve Habib Rose, <mailto:habib@thegarden.net>

I invite and encourage you to join us for the following event on October 1 to share information on neighborhood organizing about the WTO. We'll be having a neighborhood communities fair from 6-7 pm, and you would be very welcome to have a table (come at 5:30 to set up). It would be an excellent opportunity to connect with some people that may be very interested in and supportive of your work.

We will also be having regular monthly neighborhood communities get-togethers in different parts of Seattle, as well as occasional get-togethers in other places in Washington. See the NeighborNets Network at <http://www.neighbornets.org> for details.

REMINDER: CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO THE WTO AVAILABLE!

NEW CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION!

On the Internet at <http://www.tradewatch.org/publications/gtwpubs.htm>

FOR MULTIPLE COPIES CONTACT APEX PRESS ---> <mailto:JRizzi52@aol.com>

HOUSING IN SEATTLE

The Citizens' Trade Campaign has reserved hundreds of rooms in Seattle for NGOs and individual activists. In addition, community housing with local activists will be available, with preference for these spaces going to students/youth, activists with limited incomes, and those from developing countries. Seattle-area organizers are also looking at options for those who want to camp, and for activists who show up in Seattle with no prior housing arrangements made. If you want to reserve a block of rooms, please make arrangements before the end of this month. Visit <http://www.seattlewto.net> or contact Alesha Daughtrey at 202-454-5103, or <mailto:alesha@citizen.org>

STATEMENT FROM MEMBERS OF INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY

OPPOSING A MILLENNIUM ROUND OR A NEW ROUND OF COMPREHENSIVE TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

Last updated: 4 August 1999

Signed by that date by

798 organisations from over 75 countries

In November 1999, the governments of the world will meet in Seattle for the World Trade Organisation's Third Ministerial Conference. We, the undersigned members of international civil society, oppose any effort to expand the powers of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) through a new comprehensive round of trade liberalisation. Instead, governments should review and rectify the deficiencies of the system and the WTO regime itself.

The Uruguay Round Agreements and the establishment of the WTO were proclaimed as a means of enhancing the creation of global wealth and prosperity and promoting the well-being of all people in all member states. In reality however, in the past five years the WTO has contributed to the concentration of wealth in the hands of the rich few; increasing poverty for the majority of the world's population; and unsustainable patterns of production and consumption.

The Uruguay Round Agreements have functioned principally to prise open markets for the benefit of transnational corporations at the expense of national economies; workers, farmers and other people; and the environment. In addition, the WTO system, rules and procedures are undemocratic, untransparent and non-accountable and have operated to marginalise the majority of the world's people.

All this has taken place in the context of increasing global economic instability, the collapse of national economies, increasing inequity both between and within nations and increasing environmental and social degradation, as a result of the acceleration of the process of globalisation.

The governments which dominate the WTO and the transnational corporations which have benefited from the WTO system have refused to recognise and address these problems. Instead, they are pushing for further liberalisation through the introduction of new issues for adoption in the WTO. This will lead to the exacerbation of the crisis associated with the process of globalisation and the WTO.

We oppose any further liberalisation negotiations, especially those which will bring new areas under the WTO regime, such as investment, competition policy and government procurement. We commit ourselves to campaign to reject any such proposals. We also oppose the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement.

We call for a moratorium on any new issues or further negotiations that expand the scope and power of the WTO.

During this moratorium there should be a comprehensive and in-depth review and assessment of the existing agreements. Effective steps should then be taken to change the agreements. Such a review should address the WTO's impact on marginalised communities, development, democracy, environment, health, human rights, labour rights and the rights of women and children. The review must be conducted with civil society's full participation.

The failure of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) demonstrates broad public opposition to the deregulation of the global economy, the increasing dominance of transnational corporations and escalating resource use and environmental degradation.

A review of the system will provide an opportunity for society to change course and develop an alternative, humane and sustainable international system of trade and investment relations.

This statement is signed by:

[a list of more than 800 signatures - too long to post here, for them who are interested or who want to sign on contact:
mailto:ronnieh@foe.co.uk]

RECENT PRESS: GROWING CONCERNS OVER WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

[Preamble Center <http://www.preamble.org>]

Knight-Ridder/Tribune Media Services (August 17, 1999)

Boston Globe (August 19, 1999)

San Diego Union Tribune (August 19, 1999)

In just a few months thousands of environmentalists, steel workers, longshoremen, AIDS activists, farmers, and others will descend upon Seattle in a "mobilization against globalization." They will hold marches, protests, teach-ins, and conferences.

The occasion? The World Trade Organization is holding a meeting of ministers from its 134 member countries, to talk about launching a new round of trade talks.

The opposition's plans have already attracted more press attention than the official meeting. This suggests there is something big at stake here.

There is.

In fact, something big happened more than four and a half years ago, when the WTO came into existence, and our own membership was ratified by the United States Congress. But the consequences of this action are only now beginning to be understood outside of narrow policy circles.

The new bureaucracy of the WTO was given the authority to determine whether national laws on such matters as environmental protection and food safety violate international trade rules.

In other words, the burden of proof has shifted: for example, if our Environmental Protection Agency wants to regulate the content of gasoline in order to reduce pollution, it must be careful not to infringe upon the rights of foreign producers.

This principle was actually tested when Venezuela, on behalf of its gasoline producers, challenged EPA regulations on gasoline quality at the WTO. In 1997 the WTO ruled in their favor. The EPA subsequently changed its regulations, weakening its ability to enforce federal air quality standards.

Another WTO ruling last year undermined our Endangered Species Act. We have attempted to protect endangered sea turtles from extinction by requiring that shrimp fishing boats install devices that allow the turtles to escape the nets. The law applied to all shrimp sold in the United States, but the WTO ruled that this was unfair to other countries.

This is a good example of how the trade principles embodied in the WTO erode environmental standards. We have these standards because the public has decided that certain protections of our natural environment are important. We are willing to pay a higher price for certain consumer goods, for example, in order to achieve these goals. But what happens

when
other countries -- and very often this means our own corporations
producing
in other countries -- do not make the same choice? If we cannot apply
our
standards to foreign-produced goods that are sold in the United States,
these goods will simply drive American-made goods out of the market, and
defeat the purpose of the environmental legislation.

The WTO's critics argue that it is time to stop and assess the record of
the last four and a half years, before creating any new rules. But the
Clinton administration is having none of this: it's full speed ahead,
not
a moment to lose.

The Administration might have an argument if it could be shown that we
risk missing out on some great windfall. But the gains to the United
States from the last round of the GATT (the General Agreement on Tariffs
and Trade, the WTO's predecessor) have been estimated at less than \$700
million a year. This is less than one-third the cost of one B-2 bomber.

Against these meager gains we must consider the impact of trade on the
distribution of income. As trade has expanded over the last
quarter-century, the median real wage in the United States has actually
fallen. There is no longer any doubt among economists that these two
trends -- increasing trade and falling real wages -- are related. It's
not
hard to see why: without any standards for labor or human rights,
increasing trade creates a "race to the bottom" for wages and working
conditions in the same way that it undermines environmental standards.

The broad-based challenge to the WTO reflects a growing awareness that
the
decisions of these powerful institutions-- including the International
Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and others-- have a considerable impact
on
our lives and livelihoods. And unlike national governments, they don't
have to care what any angry voters might think.

You don't need a conspiracy theory to see that this unaccountability is
deliberate. All the more reason to stop and look at what the WTO has
done,
before expanding its power.

Mark Weisbrot is Research Director at the Preamble Center, in
Washington,
D.C.

RECENT PRESS: FOR STRATEGIC COORDINATION

FRONTLINE, Volume 16 - Issue 18, Aug. 28 - Sep. 10, 1999
<http://www.the-hindu.com/fline/fl11618/16181050.htm>
TRADE ISSUES

RAVI SHARMA

WITH the third ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), to be held at Seattle in the United States, between November 30 and December 4, fast approaching, social organisations across the world are trying to influence the stand of the governments in their respective countries. A two-day conference of consumer groups, organised in Bangalore by the Jaipur-based civil society Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS) on the occasion of the G-15 ministerial meeting, supported this strategy, and called for unity among the countries of the South (developing countries) in achieving their goal.

The message from the conference titled 'Southern Agenda for the Next Millenium: Role of the Civil Society' was primarily three-fold - oppose any new round of negotiations, discuss existing problems, and, most importantly, urge governments of the South to involve civil societies as they prepare for the Seattle Round.

The conference exhorted developing countries to coordinate strategically in order to identify common interests and negotiate collectively to advance them. It called upon the civil societies to ensure that equity and social justice are given priority at the negotiations and the interests of consumers, rural and urban workers, small farmers and other vulnerable groups are safeguarded. The conference asked governments of the South to encourage, support and collaborate with civil society organisations in their countries, and not to put issues such as investment and government procurement on the agenda of the WTO until existing and negotiated issues were resolved satisfactorily.

Pradeep Mehta, secretary-general of CUTS, said: "While civil societies in the North (developed world) are pushing issues, in India (as in other developing countries) the Government does not even want to acknowledge our presence. The U.S., for example, is encouraging trade unions to talk about social clauses. The Indian Government should want us to be part of the bandwagon opposing new WTO rounds like the Millennium Round, which is being advocated by some countries of the developed world. Civil society participation can help sharpen the Government's agenda on specific issues like environment, labour standards, investment policy, competition policy and government procurement - issues that are likely (disregarding the G-15 opposition to it) to be pushed at Seattle."

Delegates at the conference, such as former Foreign Secretary Muchkund Dubey, opined that developing countries should realise that "bargaining positions of countries are not equal". He cited the example of the U.S., which, because it was not pleased with the conclusions of the initial round of negotiations on telecom and financial services, saw to it that another round was held. This it did by first using the Association of Petroleum Exporting Countries (APEC) forum as a building block, getting APEC to endorse the need for a fresh round of negotiations. Subsequently, the U.S. stand was reaffirmed at the recent ARF Foreign Ministers' meeting in Singapore.

Dubey also felt that the G-15 would be unable to forestall the WTO sponsoring another round (the Millennium Round), of discussions which would in all probability take up such issues as e-commerce and investment. Dubey said: "For one thing the G-15 is not organised enough and for another, it is too vulnerable."

The conference also expressed the need for the governments of

developing countries to be pragmatic - by refraining from saying 'no' for the sake of it, realising their positions, strengthening it and then bargaining effectively.

The message conveyed by the conference was that governments from developing countries should work at two levels - public posturing and private preparation. While a G-15 ministerial meeting can provide the public posturing, it was according to Mehta, equally important to put forward privately one's concerns and be prepared to negotiate them".

Mehta said that non-governmental organisations like CUTS could make effective contributions if they were allowed to participate in the negotiating process, "We are not asking for a seat at the negotiating table since the WTO is a contractual body. What we want is transparency. For example, we could be given the annotated agenda in time. This will help us talk to our governments and, through our sister organisations, to their governments."

RECENT PRESS: INDIA CALLS FOR REJECTION OF NEW ISSUES IN WTO AGENDA

HINDUSTAN TIMES, Wednesday, August 18, 1999, New Delhi

India calls for rejection of new issues in WTO agenda

Bangalore, August 17 (K S Dakshina Murthy)

India today called for a total rejection of new issues such as social clauses or governance sought to be included in the World Trade Organisation agenda at the behest of developed countries.

Delivering the keynote address at the inaugural sitting of the G15 ministerial meeting here, Union Commerce Minister Ramakrishna Hegde said India viewed efforts to induct such issues in the WTO (World Trade Organisation) as thinly disguised efforts to impede the free flow of trade in items of export interest to developing countries.

Touching on the recent controversy over patenting of neem and other plants, Mr Hegde said fundamentally, it was necessary to recognise the sovereign rights of nations over their biological resources. "We need to also ensure that right holders of traditional knowledge derive legitimate benefits when such knowledge is used, rather than being faced with continued piracy," he said.

The G15 ministerial meet at Bangalore is in preparation for the III Ministerial Conference of WTO at Seattle, in the United States, in November this year.

Mr Hegde said the meeting here was particularly concerned with fair and conducive international trading environment. At Seattle, developing countries must focus on the implementation issues, where the record is uneven and significantly short of expectations, Mr Hegde said.

Even in the textiles and agricultural sectors, agreements which were hailed as major breakthroughs by developing countries, benefits have not accrued as earlier projected, he added. In the agricultural sector,

there is an inherent inequity in the agreement itself which allows developed countries to maintain high levels of protection, which are not allowed developing countries, the Commerce Minister pointed out. "We need to work towards introducing greater equity and balance in the agreement and dismantle trade distorting measures," he said.

Market access for developing countries is getting affected in other areas as well due to widespread use of anti-dumping and countervailing action, Mr Hegde said.

The adoption of unrealistically high standards that effectively constitute technical barriers to trade, combined with resort to sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures, have also substantially eroded the market access commitments given by advanced countries, he added.

Movement of highly skilled service providers and professionals from developing to the developed countries remains effectively circumscribed, Mr Hegde said. In the guise of 'economic needs test', real access of this section to their markets is virtually sealed off, he said.

The Minister made it clear that lack of implementation or non-fulfilment of obligations of the Uruguay Round of Agreements by developed countries could not be used by them as bargaining instruments for obtaining further concessions from developed countries.

Earlier, the Minister of state for external affairs, Ms Vasundhara Raje said as mentioned in the World Trade Organisation preamble, the discussion should keep in view objectives such as raising the standard of living, full employment and sustainable development.

RECENT PRESS: SEATTLE WOMAN STRIVING TO LIMIT POWERS OF WTO

Tuesday, September 7, 1999

By BRUCE RAMSEY
SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER REPORTER

A week ago, 50 people carrying signs swarmed into the chambers of the King County Council. Their target was a resolution welcoming the World Trade Organization to Seattle.

In this trade-dependent city, the group succeeded in having "expanded and freer international trade" taken out of the resolution. In its stead was language calling for trade agreements to "empower workers (and) consumers, protect the environment, reinforce sovereignty and foster sustainable, broad-based economic development."

A global economy that fails to protect such rights "is a global economy that will not work," the new motion said.

A global economy that will not work . . .

. that's surprising rhetoric in the booming hometown of Boeing and Microsoft. That it was passed by Democrats and Republicans was a victory for Sally Soriano. She is chief organizer of People for Fair Trade, an umbrella for groups ranging from progressive to left that either want to reform, curb or abolish the WTO.

While the corporate supporters of the WTO have been busy building airplanes and making software, Soriano has been running a campaign out of her house. She has engaged Port Commissioner Pat Davis and trade consultant Bill Bryant in public debates. She can turn on the rhetoric, and in her opponents' view, she often overstates her case. But she is a formidable opponent -- and she comes with an audience.

Her victory at the King County Council was not the first. Last year she lobbied the councils of King and Snohomish counties and the Seattle City Council to pass resolutions on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, a proposal that hardly anyone had heard of. Soriano had. And she won over the Seattle City Council 8-0.

No supporters of the investment treaty had shown up.

It was a symbolic victory, as was the one last week. It could be dismissed as street theater -- except that

between Nov. 30 and Dec. 3, Seattle will become the best stage in the world for street theater. There will be 135 trade ministers to confront, thousands of protesters to make a noise, and thousands of journalists to record it.

How many protesters? "We're talking tens of thousands," she says. That includes everyone from Canadian nationalists to Eugene, Ore., anarchists.

Soriano's house at North Beach is restfully empty, the volunteers having moved out to a store-front office at 1914 Fourth Ave. On one wall is a list of things to do; on another are her Diego Rivera murals of industrial workers. On the window sill is a book by Michael Parenti, who can be heard occasionally denouncing global capitalism on KUOW-FM. Selling Parenti tapes by mail order is one of her sources of income. The other is Ralph Nader's organization, Public Citizen.

Soriano, 53, has never married. She comes from an old Seattle family; her grandfather was a halibut fisherman in Alaska, and her father, Amigo Soriano, was a Puget Sound ship's pilot. Her uncle, Dewey Soriano, who died last year, was the man who brought Seattle its first major-league baseball club, the Pilots, in 1969.

Sally, who grew up in the Alki neighborhood, worked for her uncle at the Pacific Coast Baseball League for a

short time. Then she went off to the University of Washington to study education and sociology. Half a million Americans were fighting in Vietnam. "That's when I became an antiwar activist," she said.

In 1969, she took off a quarter to study in Cuernavaca, Mexico, with educational theorists Jonathan Kozol and Ivan Illich. Upon graduation, she was hired at the University of Wisconsin to teach in a new department called Community Education. "A 33-year-old dean hired a bunch of us," she said. They taught about the educational system, and how it should be changed.

Eight years later she returned to Seattle, teaching sometimes at the community colleges.

She stayed away from political campaigns for years, thinking them pointless. But in 1988 she began a career as an activist by becoming a Democratic delegate for Jesse Jackson. By 1993, she was campaigning for Ralph Nader against NAFTA; in 1994, against GATT, and in 1997, against Fast Track, the grant of authority to President Clinton to negotiate non-amendable trade pacts.

Washington, she said, "was one of the most difficult states to organize in" to oppose free trade. She said she isn't against trade, only the way the current system makes the rules for it.

At a Seattle University forum she described the WTO as "a supranational legal system, outside our constitution and courts . . . that has always favored corporations over labor, public health and the environment."

Business generally argues that the WTO represents the rule of law. The WTO, in that view, civilizes governments abroad something like the Constitution civilizes it here, keeping it from doing arbitrary and unpredictable things.

Soriano pictures the WTO as kind of a tory Supreme Court, ever willing to strike down the will of the people. Her goal, she says, is to stop the WTO from negotiating any more agreements, and to begin reviewing the existing ones.

Given the support of the WTO by a majority of Democrats and Republicans -- if with a different emphasis -- stopping it is not likely. Making herself and her supporters heard is well within her ability.

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