

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
December 3, 2009

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## **As Climate Talks Begin, Obama's Change Mandate in Question**

### ***Siddiqui nomination undermines U.S. credibility in international negotiations***

Washington, DC – With Copenhagen around the corner and failure of this week's WTO negotiations, the Obama administration's international agenda and leadership style are coming under scrutiny. In climate, food security and trade talks, the developing world has shown a growing resistance to increased trade liberalization as a model of international development – particularly with respect to agricultural goods and markets. The potential confirmation of controversial former pesticide lobbyist Islam Siddiqui as the U.S. trade representative for agriculture threatens to further undermine this administration's credibility in international forums by privileging U.S. corporate interests over the global public interest and common good.

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy's Alexandra Spieldoch explains: "The failed talks this week at the WTO do not come as a surprise. They signal that now more than ever we need a new approach to trade that addresses the root causes of global hunger and the challenges of climate change. Siddiqui represents more of the same. It is time for a change."

Siddiqui's nomination is currently stalled in the Senate Finance Committee, but a vote is expected any day, with full Senate deliberations immediately following the Committee vote. A broad coalition of groups delivered petitions to the White House and Senate leaders opposing the nomination of Siddiqui for Chief Agriculture Negotiator with the U.S. Trade Representative's office. More than 77,000 people signed the petition calling for President Obama to remove Siddiqui's name from consideration; another 14,000 people emailed their Senators directly; and over 80 organizations sent a letter to the Senate Finance Committee. The ad hoc coalition includes sustainable agriculture, family farm, farmworker, environmental, anti-hunger and trade groups from around the country.

Controversial appointments like Islam Siddiqui – a former pesticide lobbyist – to represent U.S. agricultural trade interests do not bolster Obama's internationalist credentials. Siddiqui is the current Vice President for Science and Regulatory Affairs with CropLife America, a pesticide and biotechnology trade group known for aggressively pursuing and protecting the interests of agribusinesses like Monsanto, Syngenta, DuPont and Dow. During Siddiqui's term alone, CropLife has been a driving force undermining U.S. compliance with international agreements ranging from the Montreal Protocol on ozone-depleting chemicals to the Stockholm Convention, an effort to regulate the use of toxic Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) including DDT, PCBs and dioxins.

"If the US Congress confirms Siddiqui, he will be well-placed to advance CropLife's agenda of pushing deadly pesticides and risky GMOs on consumers and farmers not only in the US but all over the world," warns Sarojeni Rengam, Executive Director of Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific. "It is this model of industrial agriculture that has contributed to the escalation of global food and climate crises that are threatening the survival of billions of people today."

PAN North America's Senior Scientist, Dr. Marcia Ishii-Eiteman explains, "Greenhouse gas emissions go up

with chemical- and energy-intensive farming; they go down with organic and agroecological farming. Siddiqui's confirmation would tell the world that the U.S. values the interests of our massive chemical and biotech industry over any serious concern for stabilizing climate, protecting the planet's ecosystems or defending the health of farmers, farmworkers and future generations."

"The U.S. needs a chief ag negotiator who understands that current trade agreements work neither for farmers nor the world's hungry," concludes Ben Burkett, Mississippi farmer and President of National Family Farm Coalition. "We need someone with the vision to protect the public interest, not tend to the profit margin of the most powerful global agribusinesses."

To view the petition to President Obama protesting the nominations of Siddiqui and Roger Beachy, visit: [http://action.panna.org/t/5185/petition.jsp?petition\\_KEY=2150](http://action.panna.org/t/5185/petition.jsp?petition_KEY=2150)

**Groups co-hosting the petition:** Center for Food Safety, Center for Biological Diversity, Credo, Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance, Farmworker Association of Florida, Food & Water Watch, Food Democracy Now!, Grassroots International, Greenpeace, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, National Family Farm Coalition, Organic Consumers Association and Pesticide Action Network.

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*Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP)* works with organizations around the world to analyze how global trade agreements impact domestic farm and food policies. IATP advocates for fair trade policies that promote strong health standards, labor and human rights, the environment and, most fundamentally, democratic institutions. For more information visit <http://www.iatp.org>

*National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC)*, founded in 1986, unites and strengthens the voices and actions of its diverse grassroots members to demand viable livelihoods for family farmers, safe and healthy food for everyone, and economically and environmentally sound rural communities. For more information visit [www.nffc.net](http://www.nffc.net).

*Pesticide Action Network (PAN)* promotes the elimination of highly hazardous pesticides and offers solutions that protect people and the environment. PAN North America is one of five independent regional centers of PAN International, a worldwide network of more than 600 organizations in 90 countries. For over 25 years PAN has fought for environmental justice, sustainable agriculture and food sovereignty. For more information visit [www.panna.org](http://www.panna.org).

**Available for interviews:**

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