

African People's Declaration  
On Africa and the World Trade Organisation

Statement issued at the end of joint Africa Trade Network (ATN) Southern African Peoples Solidarity Network (SAPSN) Pre-Cancun Strategy Conference, in Johannesburg 14-17 August 2003, Resisting the WTO

1. From 14-17 August 2003, we activists from across Africa, representing African civil society organisations, labour unions and other social movements, gathered in Johannesburg, South Africa to evaluate the current state of negotiations in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and to strategise and make known our positions on the 5th WTO Ministerial Conference due to be held in Cancun, Mexico from 10-14 September 2003.

2. Our stand on WTO's role: We re-affirm our recognition of the WTO as a key instrument of transnational capital in its push for corporate globalisation. We noted the many destructive effects of WTO agreements on the lives of working people and the poor, especially women, in Africa and throughout the world. We renewed our determination to continue resisting corporate globalisation, and the WTO itself until it is replaced by a fully democratic institution.

3. The context of Cancun Meeting: We noted that the forthcoming WTO Ministerial meeting is taking place against a background of a crisis of credibility of neo-liberal policies and global capitalism, that have been deepened by the Enron and other corporate scandals exposing the duplicity and venality of the bosses of transnational capital. At the same time, the world is faced with the aggressive militarism of the United States under a political leadership whose illegal attack on Iraq under false pretences has shown that law and morality are no bar to what it will do to advance the interests of American capital. Across Africa and in other developing countries neo-liberal economic policies are putting basic services, such as health and education, beyond the reach of ordinary people and deepening unemployment, poverty and social inequality. We, however, take heart from the growing strength in the organised expression of all those around the world opposed to militarism and corporate globalisation.

4. Conclusions on the current state of affairs in WTO: After our deliberations on the WTO Doha agenda and related issues, we concluded as follows:

- a. The WTO has ignored the continued and growing opposition by popular movements throughout the world to its policies and methods, such as the illegitimate ways by which the Doha Agenda was imposed on developing countries in the 4th Ministerial of the WTO.
- b. The failure of the WTO to meet agreed deadlines in various negotiations - notably Agriculture, TRIPS and Public Health, Special and Differential Treatment and the many Implementation Issues is primarily due to the refusal of the Quad(USA, EU, Japan and Canada) to accept the legitimate demands of developing countries.

- c. These failures are merely an aspect of the double standards the Quad countries apply in international trade issues; marked by one set of rules for themselves and another that they impose on developing countries, exposing the WTO as a thoroughly undemocratic institution.
- d. We particularly condemn both the EU and the US for their role in resisting the fulfilment of the deadlines and undertakings on Agriculture, and their refusal to honour the compromise consensus on TRIPS and Public Health.
- e. On the Singapore or New Issues (i.e. Investment, Competition, Government Procurement and Trade Facilitation) we reiterate our total opposition to their inclusion in the WTO, or the initiation of discussions on modalities with a view to the launch of negotiations on these in Cancun. We stand by our demand that these issues should be removed from the WTO's agenda altogether.
- f. It is clear that, as Cancun approaches, the Quad are accelerating the deployment of old and new undemocratic practices and pressures both in and outside the WTO so as to force their will on developing countries. In order to limit such illegitimate and underhand practices by the powerful, we endorse the campaign for internal transparency and participation in the WTO recently launched by many NGOs.
- g. We note the opposition to the launch of negotiations on these issues expressed by African countries, especially the declaration by African Trade Ministers at the end of their meeting in Mauritius in June 2003. We also note a new initiative taken at the WTO on 13 August by a group of African countries to demand that the official WTO text that goes to Cancun includes proposals for improving the decision-making process in the WTO; as well as repeating their opposition to the new issues. We call on these countries to stand by these positions, as a matter of democratic principle, and also urge other African and developing countries to join them.

5. Call to Action: In the light of the above we have agreed and call on other African civil society organisations, labour unions and other social movements who share our views to join us to:

- a. Mobilise the broadest possible sectors of African civil society to express their opposition to the continuing destructive role of the WTO in the lives of working people and the poor, and upon our countries' development aspirations and prospects;
- b. Mobilise and sustain strong political pressure on our governmental representatives, in ways best suited to the specific conditions in our countries, before and during the Cancun ministerial meeting; actively holding our governments accountable for the positions they take in the

Cancun Ministerial meeting, and expose any attempt to betray the best interests of the African peoples;

c. Pressure institutions of government, and our legislatures, and relevant public officials in our various countries so as to ensure the defence of our peoples' interests in the forthcoming Cancun ministerial meeting. Especially important are i) blocking the launch of negotiations on the Singapore issues and ii) rejecting any attempt by the Quad to manipulate developing countries into accepting negotiations on the Singapore Issues by linking these to issues of concern to developing countries;

d. Pressure our respective governments to endorse the two proposals tabled at the WTO by 11 African countries on 13 August 2003;

e. Be alert to, and therefore resist, the inevitable attempts by representatives of Quad countries and other governments who, between now and Cancun, will be visiting our national capitals under various guises, and contacting groups within our own countries to bully African governments to take positions detrimental to the African people on the issues on the Cancun agenda;

f. Launch an information dissemination campaign in our various countries to publicise what is happening in and around the WTO in the run up to and during the Cancun Ministerial meeting;

g. Mobilise a strong team of African activists to give voice to African perspectives in the activities of civil society organisations who will gather from around the world in Cancun;

h. Affirm our links with our partners in organisations of civil society outside Africa, including in the global North, to pressure their governments (especially of the Quad) in the interest of working people and the poor throughout the world, and in the interest of our planet;

i. Work together across Africa on the WTO, before and during Cancun, under the umbrella of the Africa Trade Network (ATN) to ensure common focus and strength in unity.

We issue this statement, and our call, as part of our commitment to the global movement against neo-liberalism and corporate globalisation, and the struggle for the establishment of alternative systems and institutions for all of humanity and the world.

Another Africa is possible!  
Another world is possible!

Issued in Johannesburg, 17 August 2003