

# **SOUTHERN AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY CONSULTATION ON TRADE AND HIV/AIDS STATEMENT**

We, members of faith-based organizations, social movements, non-governmental organisations and others from all the countries in the Southern African region, which is in a crisis of growing poverty and HIV/AIDS pandemic, met in Johannesburg, South Africa, 28-29 November 2005. This Southern African Civil Society consultation discussed the situation in our region in relation to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the forthcoming Doha Round Ministerial conference in Hong Kong, China 13-18 December 2005.

We have noted and support the positions of other African CSO meetings, such as the Africa Trade Network meeting in Accra, Ghana 16-19 August 2005. We note also the positions of African governments, in Cairo, Egypt 5-9 June 2005, and the LDC governments' meeting in Livingstone, Zambia, 25-26 June 2005. We welcome their stand on the prioritisation of the development needs of our continent and people in the current WTO negotiations. We have also noted the recommendations of the Round Table on Benchmarking which took place in Arusha, Tanzania, 21 November 2005.

We underscore the formal commitments in the Doha Round to respond to the longstanding development demands of Africa and other developing countries, and the unfulfilled promises to Africa and LDCs by the developed countries ever since the Marrakesh Undertakings in 1994.

In this context we make the following demands for the Hong Kong WTO Ministerial and beyond:

## **AGRICULTURE**

Agriculture is fundamental to the lives and livelihoods of the majority of our people and to our household, national and regional food security. Agricultural production and food security is a crucial component in the struggle against HIV/AIDS, and it is essential to our national and regional development.

Therefore we demand:

- That more developed countries must, without delay remove tariff and non-tariff barriers to our agricultural exports;
- That the highly industrialized countries must immediately stop subsidies for their domestic production and exports that result in the dumping of their excess agricultural production in our countries;
- That the fundamental rights of our governments, to subsidise and protect our agriculture, including special products and using safeguard measures, are entrenched;
- That our agricultural production systems and bio-diversity must not be subject to genetically engineered crops (GEs) and the dumping of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) disguised as food aid.

## **TRIPS**

The agreement on the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) was designed and inserted into the WTO to protect and promote the monopolised control over science and technology by global corporations. This, in turn, undermines the technological and development capacities of our countries and the rights of our governments to secure the production and provision of affordable medicines to deal with the HIV/AIDS epidemic and other diseases.

Therefore we demand:

- That our rights to produce and access medicines according to our health needs, with workable and permanent guarantees, be reaffirmed;
- That the protection against bio-piracy of our people's indigenous knowledge and national and regional bio-resources, be assured;
- That the patenting of life forms and parts thereof be removed from TRIPS;
- That, ultimately, these are not trade issues and therefore TRIPS must be removed from the WTO.

## **GATS**

The General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) was created and introduced into the WTO to promote the worldwide investment interests and operations of transnational service companies and other service providers. However, services are vital to the delivery of human rights, health services especially for HIV/AIDS, and social and economic development in our countries and region.

Therefore we demand:

- That all services essential to our people and developmental needs be excluded from GATS;
- That the essential rights of our governments to decide which, where, when or whether to open services to foreign providers be upheld;
- That targeted sectors must not be subject to obligatory negotiations set as 'benchmarks' by the powerful countries;
- That full and effective impact assessments be carried out on all services by our governments in consultation with civil society;
- That, fundamentally, services are not tradable commodities and GATS must be removed from the WTO.

## **NAMA**

The Non Agricultural Market Access (NAMA) proposal is highly imbalanced towards the export interests of transnational corporations (TNCs) into the industrial, mining, forestry, fisheries and all other sectors of our countries. The competitive pressures of TNCs against domestic producers in all these sectors will aggravate unemployment and poverty, and compound the effects of HIV/AIDS.

Therefore we demand:

- That our countries are not subject to any tariff reduction formulae that will aggravate and escalate the deindustrialization, unemployment and poverty in our countries;
- That our governments retain the right to flexible tariff policies within national strategies for economic development and diversification;
- That tariffs remain an essential source of revenue for social and economic development, including the provision of health services;
- That, fundamentally, NAMA is inimical to the development of our countries and region and must therefore be stopped.

We call on African governments to heed the voices of African people, and provide them with all necessary information through democratic, transparent and consultative processes.

We call on African governments to maintain their unity in defense of the development of Africa, form tactical and strategic alliances with the African Caribbean and Pacific group (ACP), and LDCs, and secure the support of other developing country coalitions such as the G20 and the G33.

As Southern African civil society we commit ourselves to continue our struggle for trade justice and sustainable development, to advance these positions at the Hong Kong WTO Ministerial, and to actively engage with our governments to ensure that the rights and needs of our people are secured.