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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

WTO Ministerial Conference – make a step for inclusiveness and sustainability

Brussels, 3 December 2013 (ITUC OnLine): : The Trade Ministers of World Trade Organisation's 159 Members are meeting these days in Bali, Indonesia, in the organisation's 9th Ministerial Conference. After an announcement by WTO Director General, Roberto Azevedo, that the negotiations in Geneva were not fruitful, the Ministers are expected to continue negotiating in three areas: on food security, LDC package and trade facilitation even though a negotiating ministerial was not foreseen and many delegations do not have their main negotiators in Bali. The International Trade Union Confederation and its Global Unions partners published today a statement on the WTO Ministerial Conference encouraging governments to only sign a deal that takes steps towards the implementation of the developmental mandate of the Doha Development Agenda, strengthens food security and assists the economies of Least Developed Countries (LDC).

"An Agreement on Agriculture that would protect governments' power to purchase food from farmers and enact food programmes will have great impact on the most vulnerable of people – one billion of those depend on subsistence agricultural activities" said Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of ITUC. However, in its current form, the so-called 'peace clause' would only be a temporary measure, which is a prize too high in exchange for a binding Trade Facilitation Agreement.

The Global Union Statement further calls WTO Members to conclude an ambitious Agreement on Development considering the 88 proposals that appeared earlier in the negotiations to make Special and Differential Treatment principles more operational and effective. Such an agreement, together with a package for Least Developed Countries that allows duty-free quota-free access to products and preferential treatment of their services, would be significant steps to the implementation agenda of Doha's mandate. The global union movement and Civil society have repeatedly called for an agreement on the basis of an already-negotiated package of policies for the LDCs.

Agriculture, development and trade facilitation are not the only issues discussed at Bali. The negotiations for an expanded Information Technology Agreement (ITA-II) collapsed and no new date for the restart of negotiations has been announced. However, the Ministers will most probably discuss this issue and decide on the way forward. Earlier this year, a broad coalition of trade unions and civil society organisations addressed a letter http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ita - sign on - final_en-2.pdf to the negotiating Members of the ITA-II that warned developing countries of possible erosion of domestic manufacturing and loss of growth potential in higher value-added segments of information technology manufacturing.

Read the statement: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/global-unions-statement-of-14191>

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