

AFTINET Bulletin No. 139 August 2007

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- 1. Alternative APEC public forum and Conference August 31 and September 1**
AFTINET is sponsoring the Asia Pacific People for Environment and Community alternative APEC events in Sydney. Please note the venue change for the Public Forum, both events will now be held at Guthrie Theatre, UTS, Design Building (Building 6), Harris Street, near the overhead footbridge. Harris St is off George St, near Railway Square and Central Station.

Entry to both events is by donation and registration can be done on our website www.aftinet.org.au or by calling the AFTINET office.

Public Forum

Friday 31st of August
5.30pm for 6.30pm start

Speakers at the Public Forum include:

Lori Wallach (*US – trade lawyer and director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch*)
Sharan Burrow (*Australia – President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions and the Global Unions' International Trade Union Confederation*)
Yuri Munsayac (*The Philippines – Asia Pacific for Human Development*)
Don Henry (*Australia – Executive Director, Australian Conservation Foundation*)
MC is Tim Brunero (*Australia – Former Big Brother Contestant and writer*)
5pm – Launch of new 45 minute documentary "Constructing Fear" about the impact on workers of the Howard Governments Building and Construction Industry Commission.

Community Conference

1st September
9.30am

Join a diverse range of leading thinkers, inspiring activists and community groups for presentations, workshops and exhibitions on the impacts of the APEC agenda on climate change, labour rights and human rights.

Speakers at the Conference include:

John Sutton (*Australia - National Secretary, CFMEU*)
Kelly Dent (*Australia - Labour rights campaigner, Oxfam*)
Professor Jane Kelsey (*New Zealand – University of Auckland and Action Resource Education Network of Aotearoa*)
Elmer Labog (*Philippines – Chairperson of the Kilusang Mayo Uno/May First Movement Labor Centre*)
Dave Sweeney (*Nuclear Campaigner - Australian Conservation Foundation*)

Workshop sessions at the Conference include:

Palms Australia (*Working cross culturally*)
Venezuela Solidarity Network (*The Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas as a model for APEC*)
Forum for Peace, Human Rights and the Environment (*What are the problems with the Japan FTA for Asian and Pacific People?*)
FairWear (*International campaigning on labour rights and clothing industries*)
Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (*labour rights in the region*)
APHEDA and AidWatch (*Aiding or abetting*)
Global Trade Watch (*Documentary APEC and trade liberalisation in the Asia Pacific*)
TEAR Australia (*Make Globalisation History*)
Sydney Nuclear Free Coalition (*Keep it in the ground*)
Sydney Friends of the Earth (*Dissent and the good protestor*)
Climate Action Network Australia (*International Action on Climate Change: a fair plan to ensure a safe climate*)
Lee Rhiannon (*Coal, climate change and climate refugees in the global economy*)
Jubilee Australia (*Under the Influence: How International Financial Institutions fund deforestation in SE Asia*)
Engage Media (*Online video as a tool for social change*)
Migrante – Philippines Australia (*Militarism, democracy and peoples movement in Asia and Oceania*)
Asia Pacific Network on Food Sovereignty (*APEC, WTO and bilateral free trade agreements: implications of food sovereignty in Asia Pacific*)
Food Not Bombs (*Resisting trade agreements favouring corporations while increasing poverty and hunger*)

2. Sydney Peoples Alternative Rally and Festival Friday, September 7 in Hyde Park North from 11am

All People for Environment & Community

Many thousands of people in Sydney do not welcome the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in our city. Their alternative view will be expressed at a colourful festival to be held on Friday, September 7 in Hyde Park North from 11am to 2pm.

All People for Environment and Community, a wide coalition of community groups have come together to organise the Peoples' Alternative Festival. The Festival will promote the people's alternative of fair trade, real action on global warming, genuine development to alleviate poverty, opposition to war,

and respect for the labour rights and human rights of all the peoples of our vast Asia Pacific region.

Music, performance, speakers, information and food stalls will combine to offer an inclusive peaceful people's vision for the future, in stark contrast to the secretive, big business agenda of the 21 APEC leaders behind their concrete barricades.

Bands include: Men from UNCLE; Ken Stewart (Urban Guerillas); Bolivarian Band and Korean drummers.

Organised by: **All People for Environment & Community**: Anti-Bases Campaign; Sydney Peace & Justice Coalition; Migrante Philippines Australia; Bolivarian Circle; Chilean Socialist Party / Oceania; Construction Forestry Mining & Energy Union; Australian Services Union; Maritime Union of Australia (Sydney Branch); SEARCH Foundation; Korean Resource Centre; Communist Party of Australia; Inner-West Your Rights at Work; Aust Fair Trade & Investment Network. **Contact**: Peter Murphy 0418 312 301. Jane Brock 0410 453 459. Email: pmurphy@search.org.au

ALL WELCOME!

3. Chinese labour activist tour a success

Chinese labour rights activist Monina Wong visited Australia from 23rd until the 27th July. AFTINET organised public meetings in Sydney and Melbourne involving Monina, Amnesty, FairWear and the AMWU with more than one hundred people attending in both cities. Monina conducted media interviews with SBS, Radio National, ABC Asia Pacific, 3CR, Life Matters, National Radio News and the Sydney Morning Herald. Monina also met with politicians including Lynn Allison, (Australian Democrats) Penny Sharpe (ALP) and The Greens and gave a presentation to AMWU members, so had a very eventful and productive week in Australia. Monina also visited three factories in Melbourne.

The Life Matters interview can be heard: <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/lifematters/stories/2007/1991347.htm>

4. New Free Trade Agreements Update

Indonesia

Australia and Indonesia have agreed to undertake a joint feasibility study into the merits of an FTA between the two countries. This study will commence this month and be completed by mid 2008. Indonesia is our 13th largest trading partner.

Korea

Australia and South Korea have agreed to start a feasibility study for an FTA.

Gulf Cooperation Council

DFAT announced in late July that formal negotiations have begun for a FTA with the GCC to be completed in 2008. The GCC is made up of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The GCC is our 10th largest trading partner

and is of particular importance to our automotive industries. Australia has dropped “services” from the agenda of this FTA in a bid to gain access for auto exports.

Chile

Australia has also decided to proceed with a comprehensive and ambitious FTA with Chile with no meetings announced as yet. Australian horticultural producers have responded that such an agreement could cost them \$600 million, more than Australia’s entire trade with Chile which only totals \$574 million. DFAT announced on December 8 last year that our government had agreed to start negotiations before any consultation with industry had occurred.

Pacific Islands

As part of the PACER (Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations) the Pacific Island countries are required to offer consultations with a view to negotiations on free trade arrangements with Australia and New Zealand because they have formally entered into substantive negotiations with the EU. Consultations are expected to begin this month in Vanuatu.

As reported in previous bulletins, Australia is already negotiating FTAs with China, Malaysia and ASEAN, but these negotiations are all proceeding very slowly.

5. US: Democrats take aim at China in US presidential debate

Agence France Presse, by Staff Wed 08 Aug 2007

CHICAGO, Aug 7 AFP - Democratic presidential candidates fired a stinging round of attacks on China today, bemoaning “bad food” imports and defective toys and accusing Beijing of manipulating the yuan.

It was the first sign of “China bashing” - a staple of past US campaigns - and came as candidates debated before 15,000 labour-union members concerned about lost US blue-collar jobs and the impact of global free trade.

Top contenders also sparred about whether to unilaterally strike al-Qaeda in lawless tribal areas of Pakistan and battled over the influence of corporate lobbyists in US politics.

Front-runner Senator Hillary Clinton warned the United States must deal with China’s “currency manipulation” at the forum hosted by the AFL-CIO trade unions federation.

“We have to have tougher standards on what they import into this country.

“I don’t want to eat bad food from China or have my children having toys that are going to get them sick,” said Clinton, who according to a new USA-Today/Gallup poll leads the Democratic field by 22 points.

The outdoor debate, on a humid night at a football stadium, was seen as an audition before the mighty labour block, which partially bankrolls and gets out the vote in Democratic campaigns.

Senator Barack Obama, second to Clinton in national polls five and a half months before first party nominating contests, branded China a “competitor” but not necessarily an enemy.

“If they’re manipulating their currency ... we take them to the mat.”

Bill Richardson, a long-shot candidate who is governor of New Mexico, warned China was a “strategic competitor”.

“We’ve got to say to China, you’ve got to stop fooling around with currency; you’ve got to find ways to be more sensitive to your workers.”

Former vice presidential candidate John Edwards brought up concerns over defective Chinese imports, after US toys giant Fisher-Price recalled nearly a million Chinese-produced toys over fears they might be toxic.

“We should have a Consumer Product Safety Commission that’s not looking out for big multinational corporations, but is actually looking out for the safety of our children here in America.”

Veteran Democratic Senator Joseph Biden lashed out at Bush administration loans from China he said were used to fund the Iraq war.

“They hold the mortgage on our house. We’re now in debt almost one trillion dollars to China.”

Obama rebuked rivals who mocked him as naive on foreign policy, defending his statement last week that he would if necessary be prepared to order unilateral strikes against al-Qaeda in lawless tribal areas in Pakistan.

“I find it amusing that those who helped to authorise and engineer the biggest foreign policy disaster in our generation are now criticising me,” he said.

“If we have actionable intelligence on al-Qaeda operatives, including (Osama) bin Laden, and President (of Pakistan Pervez) Musharraf cannot act, then we should. Now, I think that’s just common sense,” Obama said.

But Clinton replied, “I don’t believe people running for president should engage in hypotheticals.”

“I think it is a very big mistake to telegraph that and to destabilise the Musharraf regime which is fighting for its life against the Islamist extremists who are in bed with al-Qaeda and (the) Taliban.”

Obama spoke out against the Iraq war before the US invasion - though he was not a US senator at the time.

Clinton, and fellow candidates Senator Joseph Biden, Senator Chris Dodd and former senator John Edwards, were all on stage today and all voted to authorise the war.

Obama and Edwards both suggested that Clinton was in the pocket of corporate interests.

But she hit back: "For 15 years, I have stood up against the right-wing machine, and I've come out stronger. "So if you want a winner who knows how to take them on, I'm your girl."

6. TWN Info Service on WTO and Trade Issues

26 July 2007
Third World Network
www.twinside.org.sg

"Doha is dead", time to rethink a new model of trade

Over 90 civil society organisations worldwide have sent a letter to their Trade Ministers, calling on them to acknowledge the failure of the Doha Round and to institute a two-year moratorium to provide the time and space necessary to rethink the model and process of global trade negotiations.

The letter was sent just as the Chairs of the agriculture and NAMA negotiations at the WTO issued their revised draft modalities texts on 17 July.

"We believe that the time has come to officially declare the Doha Round of the WTO negotiations dead and to provide the necessary space to re-think the kind of multilateral trade rules that are needed to create employment and achieve sustainable development," said the CSO letter.

Below is a report of the letter.

Martin Khor
TWN

"Doha is dead", time to rethink a new model of trade

By Kanaga Raja (SUNS), Geneva, 18 July 2007

Over ninety civil society organizations from all over the world have sent a letter to their Trade Ministers, calling on them to acknowledge the failure of the Doha Round and to institute a two-year moratorium to provide the time and space necessary to rethink the model and process of global trade negotiations.

The call by the civil society groups came just as the Chairs of the agriculture and non agricultural market access (NAMA) negotiations at the WTO issued their revised draft modalities texts on 17 July.

"We believe that the time has come to officially declare the Doha Round of the WTO negotiations dead and to provide the necessary space to re-think the kind of multilateral

trade rules that are needed to create employment and achieve sustainable development,” said the civil society groups in their letter to the Trade Ministers.

A copy of the letter was also sent to WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy, who is also the Chair of the Trade Negotiations Committee that oversees the Doha negotiations, as well as the Chair of the agriculture negotiations, Ambassador Crawford Falconer of New Zealand and the Chair of the NAMA negotiations, Ambassador Don Stephenson of Canada.

Among the civil society groups that signed the letter were ActionAid International; Asian Indigenous Women’s Network; ATTAC (includes branches in Austria, Hungary, Japan, Norway and Sweden); Consumers Association of Penang (Malaysia); Corporate Europe Observatory; Council of Canadians; Focus on the Global South (Thailand, India, Philippines); Friends of the Earth; IBON Foundation, Inc (Philippines); Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP); Public Citizen; Public Services International (PSI); Tebtebba (Philippines); Sierra Club; The Berne Declaration; and Transnational Institute (TNI).

In their letter to the Trade Ministers, the civil society groups noted that it is now almost six years since the Doha Agenda was launched in November 2001.

What has followed since then is a litany of setbacks and/or failures - from the collapse of the Cancun Ministerial in 2003, followed by the July framework cobbled together in 2004, then the desperate moves of the 2005 Hong Kong Ministerial to breathe new life into the Doha agenda, which led to the suspension of the WTO negotiations in 2006 and now the recent breakdown of the G-4 (Brazil, India, EU and US) talks in Potsdam.

“Doha was supposed to be the ‘development’ round. But what has transpired over the intervening six years has been quite the opposite,” said the letter to Trade Ministers.

“Instead of coming up with a set of multilateral trade rules designed to increase the capacities of developing countries to create new jobs, eliminate poverty and build sustainable economies, the Doha Agenda has been manipulated to primarily serve the interests of the northern industrialized powers to expand market access for their transnational corporations.”

The civil society groups said that all the studies that have come out since 2005 - from the World Bank, UNCTAD, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Tufts University and the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) - demonstrate that the current proposals for the Doha Agenda make developing countries, and particularly the poorest countries, the biggest losers.

Millions of people all over the world, including farmers, fisher-folk, workers and trade unionists, environmentalists, faith-based groups and other civil society organizations, have been denouncing the Doha talks as promoting a “corporate-driven” model of trade that pays little attention to peoples’ rights and needs.

“Now, more than ever, world leaders must face up to the fact that the global trade regime has marginalised a vast array of communities and interests who have finally united to stop any further expansion of the system,” said the letter.

The Doha Agenda and Model have failed to increase the trust of WTO’s membership, let alone the public it is supposed to serve, the civil society groups said, adding that around the world, people have informed themselves and popular opinion has changed to the point where the WTO is suffocating from a crisis of legitimacy.

And, no effort by free trade champions to “better educate” the public or adopt “quick fixes” can reverse this reality.

“Declaring the death of Doha does not mean the end of [the] world trading system.” the letter stressed, pointing out that another multilateralism is possible, but not one that prioritizes the rights of corporations over the rights of people and the planet while reducing the power to self-govern.

The civil society groups urged the Trade Ministers to acknowledge the failure of the Doha Round now and called on them to institute a two-year moratorium to provide the time and space necessary to re-think the model and process of global trade negotiations.

“It’s time to go back home, and start a process of reflection and consultation with your peoples that can pave the way for a new and different model of multilateral trade.”

“The only credible option now is to stimulate public discussion and debate with governments and civil society and social movements about creating alternative trade regimes that are people, development, and environment centered,” said the letter to Trade Ministers. +