If you would like to contribute material to the bulletin, please contact Pat Ranald by email at pranald@piac.asn.au. Our website is www.aftinet.org.au.

Contents
1) Global Civil Society Protests for WTO Meeting and Sydney Fair Trade Rally 12 noon Darling Harbour Convention Centre Tuesday November 13
2) WTO tries to ram through draft statements despite disagreement
3) Developing country governments reject WTO draft statements
4) Civil Society Groups Slam Doha Draft

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1. Global Civil Society Protests for WTO Meeting and Sydney Fair Trade Rally 12 noon Darling Harbour Convention Centre Tuesday November 13

As the WTO Ministers meet this week in Doha, Qatar, where protest is illegal, civil society protests and other events are being organised around the world, in Europe, the Americas, Asia and Australia from November 9 to 13. See Indymedia www.sydney.indymedia.org for reports.

The Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior will be docked in Doha during the meeting and will be broadcasting radio reports through Indymedia www.indymedia.org

Sydney events
Fair Trade Rally
Tuesday November 13, 12 Noon
Assemble at the Convention Centre, Darling Harbour, march to Martin Place.
AFTINET members are urged to bring the banners of their organisations. For further information see www.sydneyrally.org

Seminar : Globalisation from below? Alternatives to Corporate Globalisation
Sunday November 11, 11.30-3.30 pm Tom Mann Theatre, 136 Chalmers St, Surry Hills
Speakers from the International Metalworkers Federation World Congress:
Silumko Nondawnga, General Secretary, National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA); President Mun. Korean Metal Workers Federation (KMWF); Buzz Hargrove, President, Canadian Auto Workers (CAW); Local speakers from AFTINET, Aidwatch, AMWU, Jubilee, NSW Nature Conservation Council, NUS & UnitingCare (NSW.ACT)

Band Night Sunday 11 November 7.30pm Metro Theatre, George St. Sydney
Featuring: The Tenants, Matt Ellis and Raw Sugar. With special appearances by Tug Dumbly and Frank Bennett

2. WTO tries to ram through draft statements despite disagreement on process and content (by Pat Ranald)

As the WTO prepares to for the Ministerial Meeting in Doha Qatar this week there is no sign in the draft statements that it has addressed the major issues raised by both developing country governments and civil society groups which led to the Seattle debacle two years ago. Copies of the documents are available at www.ictsd.org

Both the content of the statements and the lack of democratic process have been condemned by civil society groups and by developing country governments in the WTO.
(See items 3 and 4 below)
After two years of submissions and debate the WTO statement does not seriously address concerns about the undemocratic structure of the WTO, the difficulties with implementing existing agreements and the opposition to new agreements.

The basic problem with the structure of the WTO is that it is meant to work through consensus of all governments but in reality it is dominated by the strongest economies, The US and the EU. Together with Canada and Japan they form the four "quad" countries which have the major say in documents drafted by the WTO secretariat.

The latest documents were drafted by the WTO secretariat but have not been formally approved by as drafts by the WTO general Council. This is unprecedented and has been by some governments seen as a failure to follow WTO rules.

The documents commit members to negotiate on industrial goods, government purchasing and customs procedures, and to continue existing negotiations on agriculture, services and intellectual property rights. They also commit members to preliminary talks on investment and competition policy with a commitment to start negotiations in two years. The document refuses to acknowledge that there are still major disagreements (usually included as square brackets in the text).

Many developing countries have been adamant that they do not want negotiations on government purchasing, investment or competition policy. This is because the inclusion of these areas in trade agreements treats them purely as traded goods under WTO rules and removes many options for local development policies. A WTO agreement on government purchasing would start with negotiations on "transparency" of purchasing requirements but under WTO rules it could eventually mean that government could not use purchasing contracts to favour local firms or local employment over transnational firms, and would have to open up all contracts to competition from transnational firms.

An agreement on investment raises the spectre of the failed 1998 OECD Multinational Agreement on Investment. This agreement, which was defeated by popular opposition, prevented any limitations on foreign investment in any industry, and prevented any obligations from being placed on foreign investors, like the employment or training of local people or the use of local products. It also gave corporations the power to sue governments if they broke the rules of the agreement. Under such an agreement Australia could no longer limit the degree of foreign ownership in the media, Telstra or Qantas.

There is also disagreement about agriculture, where most developing countries and some others like Australia want the removal of US and EU agricultural subsidies. This is now on the agenda, but it remains to be seen whether the US and the EU will continue to resist any real progress as they have in the past. There is also disagreement between the US and Japan on this issue. Developing countries want more recognition of their problems with food security and rural development.

A major gap remains on the issue of access to medicines and the rights of the huge drug corporations under the Trade in Intellectual Property Rights agreement. The unfairness of this agreement was shown this year when drug companies took legal action against South Africa for trying to make available cheap generic drugs for the AIDS epidemic. US drug companies also persuaded the US government to take similar action in the WTO against Brazil. Both actions were only dropped after massive global civil society campaigns. Developing countries want the TRIPS agreement to clarify that governments can take measures to protect public health. The US is supporting narrower wording which refers to specific epidemics and "affordable prices".
Gaps also remain about the relationship between the WTO rules and international standards on the environment and labour rights, both of which are mentioned but about which there is no agreement.

Over the last week both the US and the EU have been exerting strong bilateral pressure on many developing countries to agree to the new drafts. This will not resolve the issues and may lead to another Seattle type debacle and further loss of credibility for the WTO.

3. Developing country governments reject the WTO draft statements
(Summarised from a report by Shefali Sharma, IATP Trade Information Project, November 4).

On October 31, by Stuart Harbinson, Chair of the WTO General Council told Council representatives that the WTO Secretariat did not intend to make any changes to the drafts, despite the fact that they did not reflect the deep disagreements on many issues.

He rejected any further discussion of the drafts at the meeting and said that the documents would be sent direct to Ministers for the meeting. He said that a covering letter would indicate areas of disagreement, but the letter would be drafted by the secretariat and not subject to consultation.

Many developing country governments at the meeting objected to this process and to the content of the document.

The Indian representative said "I must say that it is not possible for me to acquiesce in a situation where a draft ministerial declaration is transmitted to the Ministers without reflecting concerns and objections from a large number of countries including mine."

The Egyptian representative said that the drafts "appeared to ignore many of the views and positions expressed by my delegation, as well as those of many other developing countries"

The Tanzanian representative, speaking for the least developed country group of 30 countries, said that there were still substantial areas of disagreement and that these should be indicated in the drafts. The fact that they were not would make it more difficult to reach consensus in Doha.

These concerns were echoed by the Haitian representative who questioned the legitimacy of the procedure under WTO rules. Seven countries which had recently joined the WTO said that they had already agreed to extensive commitments and that the new issues would further burden their economies. They said that their concerns had not been reflected in the text.

4. Civil Society Groups Slam Doha Draft (October 29, 2001)
The new draft of a Ministerial Declaration for the WTO's upcoming Doha summit was repudiated strongly by civil society groups from around the world today. The latest attempt to prepare a document for the WTO meeting, which is planned for November 9-13 in Doha, Qatar, was met with outrage by civil society and disbelief and frustration by developing countries and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) because the tone and content of the new text presumes a consensus on a future WTO agenda which does not exist. Non-governmental organisations from around the world called on their governments to denounce this text as illegitimate and to oppose it being moved forward for use at the WTO Doha Ministerial.

This text follows on a previous draft declaration which was widely rejected by developing country WTO delegates. The new text continues to exclude the developing countries' key demands but includes many proposals to which these WTO Members adamantly object. Last month's consultations at the WTO have resulted in a further breach of due process by steamrolling ahead with a version that lacks any options or "brackets" around a text that is still heavily disputed. This
creates a serious breach of democratic process whereby months of repeated interventions by the majority of the WTO's own membership have been dismissed.

In contrast to this text, in reality there remain deep disagreements among WTO Member nations about the organisation's future agenda. Since before the Seattle WTO Ministerial, most developing country WTO Members have demanded that the existing flaws and imbalances in the WTO be addressed, but the U.S. has led unbending opposition to this "implementation agenda." The European Union push for expansion of WTO disciplines into new issues, such as investment, competition policy and procurement, has been resoundingly rejected by developing nations. There remain significant divisions around the agriculture negotiations where developing countries are pushing for development concerns such as food security and rural development while the US and EU continue to protect their markets through export subsidies and credits. Many WTO Members demand new negotiations on anti-dumping policy but the U.S. has insisted this issues be off the table, although that issue, along with investment, competition, procurement and more, are included as topics for future negotiations in this latest text.

Meanwhile, the list of provisions that developing nation WTO Members have identified for urgent review and repair before any WTO negotiations on new issues are actually more watered down in the latest text. Under existing WTO agreements, the poorest countries' share of world trade has declined and many poor countries' development and health policies have come under attack as violations of WTO rules. The new draft responds to these demands by effectively restating the U.S. hardline position that none of these issues will be addressed without further concessions by the developing countries.

The new draft text is also viewed as a slap in the face to the global civil society movement of peasant farmers and fisherfolk, workers and environmentalists who have worked together internationally for years before the Seattle Ministerial and since. Many civil society and labor groups have unified around an effort, dubbed the "Our World Is Not for Sale: " campaign, which calls for transformational change to the WTO.

The demands of these groups, which include an array of mass movements and organizations from the developing and developed world and global labor and farmer organizations, were also uniformly dismissed in the latest draft Ministerial text.

The recalcitrance of the WTO Secretariat and the few rich nations who have greatest pull on the WTO agenda to address the developing country and civil society demands is pushing the Doha Ministerial towards an outcome that may either spell disaster for the majority of its members or another Seattle: an outright rejection of an invalid text.