

MODEL LETTER TO MINISTERS OF TRADE

Dear _____,

Preparations for the 5th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) (Cancun, 10-14 September 2003)

Trade representatives in Geneva are at present undertaking negotiations in the Doha Round of trade negotiations, which is scheduled for mid-term review at the 5th WTO Ministerial Conference, taking place in Cancun, Mexico in September 2003. The (*name of your organisation*) is concerned that those negotiations are failing to address many vital social, developmental and regulatory concerns, and consequently may be unable to meet their ambitions to improve living standards, increase employment or reduce poverty around the world. Furthermore, the WTO's credibility and legitimacy among the general public stand to decline further, as one more part of the current backlash against globalisation.

The (*name of your organisation*) is affiliated to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) along with 230 other trade union centres from 150 countries around the world. I am writing to you to convey the trade union statement, endorsed by the ICFTU as part of Global Unions, on the agenda for the 5th WTO Ministerial Conference. I would invite you to consider the trade union statement and would be pleased to have your response. We urge you to support the proposals it contains during the current negotiations in Geneva and at the 5th WTO Ministerial Conference itself, as they would both advance the interests of (*name of your country*) and contribute to addressing the serious problems of the multilateral trading system at the present time.

The trade union statement examines the reforms that are needed to the WTO to make it more transparent and democratic, and makes proposals in a range of areas to assist the development of developing countries. It enumerates measures to protect the fundamental rights of workers against unscrupulous governments or companies which seek to gain an unfair advantage in international trade through the violation of core labour standards. The statement proposes various safeguards that are needed to ensure that public services and other services of general interest cannot be undermined by private sector competition under WTO disciplines.

Concerning the "Singapore issues", the trade union statement makes the case for multilateral investment rules built around the promotion and protection of social policies through binding and enforceable investor obligations, which unfortunately are absent from the proposals tabled at the WTO. Similarly, the statement indicates the difficulties with the current proposals on competition policy. While emphasising the positive potential of negotiations on transparency in government procurement, the statement suggests that WTO measures for trade facilitation should remain of a non-enforceable nature.

Specific measures are proposed so that sustainable development is incorporated effectively into every aspect of WTO work. In the area of agriculture, the trade union statement proposes reduction and reorientation of agricultural subsidies towards sound rural development, and the elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies.

I hope the government of (*name of your country*) will support trade union proposals in the current discussions at the WTO in Geneva, and I look forward to receiving your views on the attached statement.

Yours sincerely,