

South Asian Parliamentarians Forum on WTO Hong Kong Ministerial

The Islamabad Declaration

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Declaration of the members of the South Asian Parliaments assembled in Islamabad, Pakistan, 29-30 August 2005, for the South Asian Parliamentarians Forum on WTO Hong Kong Ministerial.

Aware that the sixth ministerial meeting of the WTO, which is scheduled from December 13-18, 2005 in Hong Kong will have massive consequences for the developing countries as well as the LDCS;

Aware that trade liberalization in the name of 'free trade' during the last decade under the WTO regime has been fundamentally flawed with disastrous results to the poor countries;

Aware that during the last decade, poor nations have been forced to submit to market fundamentalism and have been coerced through various agencies into opening their markets to foreign corporations and foreign produce, privatizing their services and abandoning the measures which helped small domestic companies to compete with overseas competitors;

Aware, that while weaker trading nations have been repeatedly promised that every concession that they make to free trade will be matched by similar concessions by the powerful nations, every time the rich world has responded by breaking almost every promise it has made;

Aware that poverty for many of the world's people, means death by starvation and disease and that the immediate cause of such starvation and disease is the lack of purchasing power;

Aware that the world's purchasing power resides in the hands of the people who need is least, while who need it most, for such necessities as food, clean water, housing, health and education, have almost none;

Aware that a one percent increases in the share of world exports for each developing region would reduce the number of people in extreme poverty by hundreds of millions;

Aware that the working population in farming is barely 3% in the rich countries in contrast to the majority in the poor countries, fair trade in the products of farming would cost the rich world very little in terms of the loss of welfare to its inhabitants, while delivering major potential benefits to poorer nations;

Aware that the rich nations now give their farmers nearly \$ 1 billion a day as subsidy which is six and half times of what they give poor nations in the form of aid;

Aware that the rich nations impose much higher tariffs on goods from poor nations than on goods from other rich nations;

Aware that intellectual property rights granted by the WTO over the years have enabled

corporations to assert exclusive control over genetic material and plant and animal varieties forcing the poor people of the developing countries and the LDCs to pay them a license fee which forms a discriminatory commercial practice and a tariff barrier

Aware that foreign direct investment can some times cost a poor nation more money than it makes;

Noting that since the adoption of the Doha work program there is little evidence of progress on the development of the developing countries as well as the LDCs while on the other hand the rich countries still continue to pressurize poor countries for deeper commitment towards further liberalization in crucial sectors such as agriculture, services and bound tariff rates;

Realizing that due to the lack of progress on the special and differential treatment (STD) and implementation issues the economies of the developing countries and the LDCs will face grave consequences;

Recognizing that we need to devise a system governing the flow of goods around the world which offers a perfect equality of opportunity permitting a significant transfer of wealth from rich to the poor all allowing poorer nations to compete on roughly equal terms, addressing the balance of trade between nations and ensuring that temporary deficits did not turn into permanent debt;

We, the parliamentarians of the South Asian countries, considering the urgency to discuss WTO related issues and to play our vital role as peoples' representatives in the ongoing negotiations of the World Trade Organization (WTO);

Call upon the developed countries to stop dumping of their agricultural and industrial products and eliminate all subsidies and export credits, forthwith, from agricultural products;

Urge the developed countries to provide wider market access to exports from developing countries as well as the LDCs and supplement more rapid debt relief with an increased level of new unconditional financial support for the heavily indebted countries;

Call upon various developing countries as well as LDCs to build defensive as well as offensive strategies that promote the interests of the peoples of the developing countries and the LDCs and their economies and to further strengthen the unity and solidarity among the poor nations;

We urge the governments of the South Asian countries to make coordinated efforts and remain firm and committed in articulating and sustaining priorities which promote the interests of their people and their economies.

We assert that the WTO and rich countries must end the undemocratic practices such as mini-ministerial meetings, green room processes, Five Interested Parties (FIPs) etc, and the process should be made transparent and inclusive;

We emphasize that the targets of Millennium Development Goals can not be met unless the trade distorting subsidies and protection in rich countries are eliminated;

We urge that the rich countries should accept the free flow of semi-skilled and less skilled persons from poor countries;

We urge that rich countries must accept the right of poor countries to protect the food security, livelihood of small farmers, labor rights and local industries;

We also urge that basic needs like education, health and water must not be privatized.

And in order to play an effective role in the WTO negotiations, we hereby, declare the formation of South Asian Parliamentarians Forum on WTO (SAPFOW) with immediate effect. While more parliamentarians from South Asia will be invited to join, the SAPFOW, at this point in time, will be comprised of the following members of the South Asian Parliaments:

Srilanka

1. Honorable Hr Mithrapla, Deputy Minister for Trade, Commerce and Consumer Affairs, United People's Freedom Alliance
2. Chamal Rajapakse, Deputy Minister of Plantation Industries, United People's Freedom Alliance
3. Chandra Secharen, Member Parliament, United People's Freedom Alliance

India

4. Deba Brata Biswas, Member Parliament, All India Forward Block
5. Ramdas Athawale, Member Parliament, Republican Party of India

Bangladesh

6. Mr. Redwan Ahmed, Chair, Parliamentary Standing Committee, Ministry of Commerce
7. Mr. Abu Hena, Member Parliament, Bangladesh National Party
8. Prof. Qazi Golam Morshed, Member Parliament, Bangladesh National Party
9. Mr. Farid Uddin Chowdhury, Member Parliament, Bangladesh National Party
10. Golam Habib Dulal, Member Parliament, Jatiya Party
11. Col Faruk Khan, Member Parliament, Awami League
12. Professor Sirajul Akbar, Member Parliament, Awami League

Nepal

13. Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari, Former Member Parliament
14. Mr. Pari Thapa, Former Member Parliament
15. Mr. Akkal Bahadur Bista, Former Member Parliament
16. Mrs. Ambika Pant Chapagain, Former Member Parliament

Pakistan

17. Mr. Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Member Parliament, Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians (PPPP)
18. Mr. Syed Naveed Qamar, Member Parliament, PPPP
19. Mr. Farooq Sattar, Member Parliament, MQM
20. Mrs. Mehnaz Rafi, Member Parliament, PPPP
21. Mr. Ahmad Alam Anwar, Member Parliament, Independent
22. Mrs. Shagufta Jumani, PPPP
23. Mr. Muhammad Hussain Mehndi, MMA
24. Mr. Ch. Manzoor Ahmad, PPPP
25. Mr. Qamar Zaman Kaira, PPPP
26. Mrs. Nafisa Munawar Raja, PPPP
27. Mrs. Kashmala Tariq, PML (Q)

Next meeting of the SAPFOW would be held this year before the WTO Hong Kong Ministerial meeting at Dhaka.

— Declaration Ends —

P.S.

The two-day South Asian Parliamentary Forum concluded with a call urging upon developed

countries to stop dumping their industrial and agricultural products in developing and least developed countries (LDCs). The forum demanded that WTO issues should be debated in the parliaments of the South Asia countries.

The forum adopted the Islamabad Declaration “Make WTO work for People” at a media briefing. The parliamentarians also formed the “South Asian Parliamentarians Forum on WTO (SAPFOW)” that would hold its next meeting in Dhaka before the Hong Kong Ministerial Meeting on WTO.

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