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Call for International Actions against GATS - WTO & the Privatization of Basic Services

Services Out of WTO, WTO out of Services! No to GATS! No New Deal in Hong Kong!

Friday 14 October 2005, by [Movements \(international\)](#) (Date first published: 14 October 2005).

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In the run up to the December 2005 Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Hong Kong, trade negotiators are under intense pressure by their respective governments to achieve a „successful% outcome in the negotiations for the Doha Development Round, which includes expansion of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). As WTO leaders have tried to ensure by stealthily hatching the July Framework in 2004, services liberalization agreements should be accelerated and national policies must be made with greater flexibility, such that more markets are pried open to global trade not just in manufactured goods but in services as well.

In truth, there is more than just the acceleration of services liberalization in GATS. Contrary to how it is packaged, GATS is not the trade agreement that it is but one-sided investment tool that gives global corporations increasingly unhampered access to markets and human services, and grants them as much if not even greater rights than citizens to exploit such access. The WTO and the European Commission have said as much, respectively flaunting GATS as the first multilateral agreement on investments and principally as an instrument of business.

Practically all sectors, from water delivery and transportation to health and education are considered services under GATS. Any barrier to global capital in these sectors, including national safeguards against inhuman working conditions or environmental degradation will be steadily demolished. In fact, the very sovereign rights of nations to protect the interests of citizens and uphold their welfare, above all, have no place under the GATS framework.

Other agents of global corporate domination — the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund — have long imposed policy conditionalities of liberalization, deregulation and privatization upon South countries, with disastrous and fatal outcomes for entire populations and economies of the developing world. Governments have been pressured to deregulate and privatize public services, like water, power and health, depriving millions of the basic requirements for a decent life. Poor farmers, workers, women and children severely suffer the adverse impacts of

surrendering control of public services to private corporations. GATS-WTO further limits developing countries, chances of development and survival. Water resources and services, recognized as crucial to development, are particularly in danger of commodification and privatization. European water giants have already been making large investments in many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The interests of firms like Suez, Vivendi and Thames Water are clearly behind the European Union's push for the inclusion of water services in the coverage of GATS.

Experiences across South countries show that the basic rights of people, especially the poor and the marginalized, are being progressively eroded by governments surrendering such critical services sectors as health, water, power, housing and education to private big business. Many countries in the South have suffered outbreaks of cholera and other gastro-intestinal diseases because safe water and basic health care are increasingly being made accessible only to those with the capacity to pay.

GATS proponents deceitfully argue that governments can choose to keep certain sectors closed and that privatization of basic social services is not a GATS requirement. But GATS has very clear bias for private business and non-transparent WTO mechanisms favor developed nations, and processes allow them to apply intense pressure on developing countries.

It is most urgent to raise our voices and create a strong wave of international opposition against GATS and the WTO. From now to December, let us mobilize in our own countries and manifest our protests in various ways.

We call on social movements, people's organizations and non-government organizations to hold regionally coordinated actions on October 19 to protest against GATS and privatization, at the start of the WTO General Council meeting in Geneva.

At the forthcoming 6th Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong, let us raise our voices, collectively pool our strengths to mobilize against GATS, and mark December 14 as the International Day of Protest Against GATS and privatization!

Signed:

(Please sign on and circulate widely. Send signatures and information about your planned actions to apmdd@jubileesouth.org & secretariat@jubileesouth.org)

GLOBAL

Jubilee South

ASIA/PACIFIC -Regional

Jubilee South-APMDD

Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives

Focus on the Global South (India, Thailand, Philippines)

Via Campesina - Asia

Asia Forum for Human Rights and Development

Asian Migrants Center

Migrant Forum in Asia

NGO Forum on ADB

Asia Pacific Forum on Women

Law and Development

Documentation for Action Groups in Asia

International Gender and Trade Network - Asia

ISIS International - Manila

South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication

AFRICA - Regional

Africa Jubilee South

AFRODAD

LATIN AMERICA & THE CARRIBEAN - Regional

Jubileo Sur Americas

Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI)

EUROPE - Regional

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières (ESSF)

Women in Development Europe

ARGENTINA

Dialogo 2000

AUSTRIA

Center for Encounter and Active Non-Violence

AZERBAIJAN

Center for Civic Initiatives

BANGLADESH

Community Development Library

Lokoj Institute

Bangladesh Agricultural Farm Labor Federation

Bangladesh Sramajibi Kendra

Karmojibi Nari

Bangladesh Jatiya Sromik Jote

Jatiya Krishok Jote

BanglaPraxis

Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication

VOICE

WARBE

Coastal Development Partnership

BELGIUM

11.11.11 Coalition

International Young Christian Workers (IYCW)

BRAZIL

Jubileo Sul - Brazil

CANADA

KAIROS : Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives

CAMBODIA

Women's Agenda for Change

Partnership for Development in Kampuchea

CAMEROON

Centre for Promotion of Social and Economic Alternatives

CHAD

Association Tchadienne por la Non-Violence (AINV)

COLOMBIA

Mejia Mujeres y Economia

Asociacion Nacional de Empleados de la Republica

COTE D'IVOIRE

Forum national sur la Dette et la Pauvreté

CUBA

CIEM

ECUADOR

Accion Ecologica

Alianza De Los Pueblos Del Sur Acreedores De Deuda Ecologica/ SPEDCA

Peoples Ecological Debt Creditors Alliance

Comite Trabajadores Petroindustrial

Comite de Empresa Trabajadores Electrica Loja

CETAPE-Por La Unificacion Sindical

EL SALVADOR

Red Sinti Techan (Maiz del Pueblo)

FINLAND

Network Institute for Global Democratisation- NIGD

HAITI

PAPDA

HONDURAS

Bloque Popular

HONG KONG

HKPA- Hong Kong People's Alliance on WTO

Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions

Hong Kong Christian Industrial Committee

Justice & Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese

Filipino Domestic Helpers General Union

Zt Teng

Union of Hong Kong Post Office Employees

Government Mod 1 Staff General Union

Association Of Government Technical And Survey Officers

Global Network

Association of Government Cartographic Staff

Government Employees Solidarity Union

Food and Environmental Hygiene

Department Foremen Grade Staff General Union

Hong Kong & Kowloon Life Guard's Union

Hospital Authority Employees General Union

INDIA

Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti

National Confederation of Officers Associations of

Central Public Sector Undertakings

India Social Action Forum

People's Monitoring Group on Electricity Regulation

The Association of Karnataka Farmers

Centre for Organization, Research and Education

River Basin Movement

Rural Volunteers Centre-Assam

All Assam Krishak Mukti Sangram Samitee

Bhumi Putra Bhumi Adhikar Suraksha Mancha-Assam

Intercultural Resources and Lokayan

INDONESIA

Koalisi Anti-Utang

International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development

KRUHA - People's Coalition for the Rights to Water

Working Group on Power Sector Restructuring

Transportation and Delivery Workers Federation

Migrant CARE

Institute for Global Justice

IRELAND

Presentation Justice Network

ITALY

Redazione A Sud

JAPAN

Anti WTO / ATTAC

Jubilee Kyushu on World Debt and Poverty

Peace Boat

KENYA

Solidarity African Network in Action

KOREA

Korean People's Action Against FTAS and WTO (KOPA)

Korean Confederation of Trade Unions

Federation of Korean Trade Unions

Korean Public Services Union

Korean Government Employees' Union

Korean Labour Social Network on Energy

People's Health Coalitions for Equitable Society

Korean Catholic Farmers Movement

Korean Education Solidarity

Altogether

International Center for Labor Solidarity (ICLS)

MALAYSIA

Monitoring Sustainability of Globalization

Friends of the Earth

MALDIVES

Society for Health Education

MOZAMBIQUE

Economic Justice Coalition

NEPAL

Rural Reconstruction Nepal

All Nepal Women's Association

General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions

Center for Human Rights and Democratic Studies

Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists

NETHERLANDS

Dutch GATS Platform

Transnational Institute- TNI

NEW ZEALAND

ARENA- Action Research and Education Network of Aotearoa

NORWAY

The IGNIS Foundation

PAKISTAN

Muttehida Labour Federation

People's Rights Movement

Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum

Anjuman Asia Awam (Association of Peoples of Asia Pakistan Chapter)

Labor Party Pakistan

PANAMA

Pastoral Social-Laita

PARAGUAY

Foro Popular Por La Energia

PHILIPPINES

Freedom from Debt Coalition

Stop the New Round Coalition

BMP- Filipino Workers Solidarity

Railway Workers Union

SANLAKAS

KALAYAAN - Movement for People's Freedom

MAKALAYA

BISIG

Partido ng Manggagawa

Makabayan Pilipinas

Confederation of Independent Unions

KPP- Philippine Housing Rights Coalition

Alternate Forum for Research in Mindanao

WomanHealth Philippines

Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement

Kanlungan Center Foundation, Inc.

Welga ng Kababaihan

JPICC- Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines

PUERTO RICO

Puertoriquena Contra Al Alca

SENEGAL

African Forum on Alternatives

SOUTH AFRICA

SEATINI

Alternative Information and Development Center (AIDC)

SRI LANKA

Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform

National Fisheries Solidarity

United Federation of Labor

Lawyers for Human Rights and Development

Center for Environmental Justice

Sri Lanka Working Group on Trade & IFIs

TAIWAN

Workers' Democracy Association

TANZANIA

Tanzania Gender Networking Program

Tanzania Association of NGOs (TANGO)

THAILAND

PSI Thai Affiliates Council

Assembly of the Poor

Labour Union of Provincial Waterworks Authority

Labour Union of Electricity Generating Authority

NHA Union

Public Health

Communication Worker's Union

Farmer's Federations Association for Development

MEAWU

LUMWA

Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women

People's Coalition Party

USA

Jubilee USA Network

Center for Economic Justice

50 Years is Enough!

Development Gap

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Stop HIV/AIDS in India Initiative, Washington DC

ZIMBABWE

Ecumenical Support Services

Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development

Southern Africa Peoples' Solidarity Network

* Also adopted by the participants of the Conference on WTO, Development and Migration, July 2005