

Delegation of the European Parliament Left Condemns European Union Negotiators' Obsession with Market Access at the WTO

Friday 21 October 2005, by [GUE/NGL](#) (Date first published: 18 October 2005).

Geneva,

On the eve of the meeting of the WTO General Council, a delegation of MEPs representing the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) at the European Parliament was in Geneva. The delegation included the Group's President, Mr Francis Wurtz (France) and MEPs Helmuth Markov (Germany) and Erik Meijer (the Netherlands). A number of advisors were also present, including the consultant Mr Raoul Jennar.

The delegation noted that the WTO negotiations were again being conducted without any transparency and were excluding from the different meetings those countries that are least rich and that have most demands to make in terms of their rights to development.

The European agenda is characterised by an obsession with market access which is resulting in a massive attempt to liberalise services and to impose a systematic lowering of customs tariffs on non-agricultural products (NAMA), which again goes way beyond the Doha agenda.

This course is directly linked to a strategy of lowering wage costs and social standards, more company relocations and the liberalisation of public services (the so-called "Bolkestein" Directive).

Like during the run-up to Cancun, we are witnessing the effects of spectacular announcements by the United States and the European Union about reducing export aids for agricultural products. But an agreement aiming to further defer the removal of scandalous export subsidies while, at domestic level, maintaining, alongside legitimate domestic subsidies, a mass of unjustifiable subsidies for the benefit of agri-business and large farm holdings is in fact taking shape.

The left-wing group is asking that EU governments revise the European Commission's negotiating mandate, which dates back to 1999, in other words before Seattle.

The Group demands that an end be put to export subsidies for agricultural products immediately, without any compensation, by the European Union and other industrialised nations, and that the CAP is made more democratic so that it benefits only genuine farmers and defends the social, environmental and territorial interests of agriculture. It asserts for any country the right to guarantee sovereignty and security for its food, and to protect its market for this purpose.

As far as the NAMA agreements are concerned, the protection of emerging industries as an element of the right to development must be recognised. Regarding services, their liberalisation is only a priority for multinational companies. The majority of developing countries, like European citizens, are opposed to this liberalisation. But free choice must be left to all countries on this issue. Our conviction is that strengthening public services is essential for development and social justice.

The GUE/NGL group considers that the trade agreements have to be subordinate to questions of

development. That implies, for example, an urgent revision of the TRIPS agreements which block access to medicines to fight against major epidemics and makes it increasingly difficult for peasant farmers to purchase seeds by imposing GMO seeds on them.

The GUE/NGL group will send a delegation to Hong-Kong and will continue to work closely with different and progressive political forces and with social movements so that human rights, the right to development, to social justice, to respect for the environment and cultural diversity take precedence over the marketplace.