

## Civil Society Recommendations for LDCs

Meeting just before least-developed countries' trade ministers gathered in Dhaka to forge a common position for the WTO's Cancun Ministerial Conference, civil society organisations developed a 22-page Dhaka Declaration<sup>1</sup> of their own, recommending a number of priorities that LDC governments should focus on. Many of these are reflected in the Dhaka Declaration adopted by the ministers four days later (see page 17).

Highlights of the International Civil Society Forum's declaration include:

- The outstanding implementation issues in favour of LDCs should be resolved at the Cancun Conference. Special and Differential Treatment in favour of LDCs should be made effective and enforceable. A Framework Agreement on SDT should be accepted. LDCs' commitment to any future single undertaking should be conditional upon the full incorporation of SDT into the WTO. The SDT framework agreement should establish that the implementation of obligations would be modulated according to the level of development of each country and reviewed periodically, taking into account not only per capita GNP, and exports, but also human development indices and goals. LDCs should not be required to accept additional commitments nor enter into negotiations aimed at establishing obligations in new issues.
- The consolidation of such duty-free and quota-free treatment within a contractual instrument in the WTO is the first priority at Cancun, but this must be complemented by improved and simplified rules of origin. From Cancun onward, a moratorium should be adopted on anti-dumping, countervailing duties and safeguard measures against imports from LDCs. There should also be binding obligations to provide LDCs with the necessary measures, including technical and financial assistance, to enable them to overcome difficulties in meeting SPS requirements.
- Export subsidies, including export credits, on agricultural products that compete with those produced by LDCs, should be eliminated as a matter of priority, at the latest by the Ministerial Conference. Domestic subsidies which result in such products entering world markets at dumped prices should also be eliminated.
- Without expanded commitments in the areas of movement of natural persons (MNP) and temporary migration, LDCs will stand to gain nothing from the services negotiations. Commitments on MNP should be complemented by the ratification by all governments of the UN Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and the Members of their Families.
- Enabling LDCs to compete would require the effective application of the access to technology provisions of Article IV of GATS, as well as operationalisation of the technology transfer provisions of Article 66 of the TRIPs Agreement, and paragraph 7 of the Doha Declaration on TRIPs and Public Health, through providing monetary incentives to the suppliers of technology.
- In the review of Article 27.3(b) of the TRIPs Agreement substantial revisions should be made (a) to protect the rights of farmers, indigenous people and local communities, including by the formulation of a *sui generis* system of protection of plant varieties, and (b) to prohibit patents on life forms.
- With regard to paragraph 6 of the Doha Declaration on TRIPs and Public Health, LDCs should press for a solution that honours the Doha Declaration, is automatic, and economically viable. There should be no restrictive list of diseases, which would in effect imply that the health of people in LDCs has a lower priority than of those in other countries. LDCs must resist pressure to adopt TRIPs-plus standards. They should make full use of their rights under the TRIPs Agreements.
- Acceding LDCs should be allowed to accede to the WTO under conditions no less favourable than those available to the existing LDC members. The accession process should be made less onerous with LDCs being automatically eligible for all SDT provisions.
- Capacity-building assistance should be made available not only for training and workshops but also for physical capacity-building to improve trading capacity of LDCs. The Cancun Ministerial Conference must draw an effective mechanism for this.
- LDC ministers should demand a democratic process of nomination of Chairpersons of the various Committees, Working Groups and the Trade Negotiations Committee.

<sup>1</sup> Dhaka Declaration of the Global Civil Society on the occasion of the Second LDC Trade Ministers Meeting; see [http://www.cpd-bangladesh.org/ldc\\_dhakafi.pdf](http://www.cpd-bangladesh.org/ldc_dhakafi.pdf)

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