

Briefing Paper on WTO 10th Ministerial Conference



The Imperialist Agenda Pushes Ahead!

Roots for Equity, Pakistan
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On December 15-18 the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference will be held in Nairobi, Kenya. WTO is a multilateral trading organization which designs and develops policies of International trade. Many around the globe including peoples movements and peasant organizations believed that this is a controversial organization and have a negative opinion since it promotes the advanced developed economies corporate interests; the role of WTO is considered to intensify imperialist capitalist agenda, creating legal grounds for control of resources, markets and labor by transnational corporations, a majority of which have their head-quarters in the North.

There are various issues and areas where the economic and trade differences among developing and developed countries are at stake particularly on the subject of agriculture. No doubt, it was this particular area, that is the inclusion of agriculture in the WTO negotiations that accelerated the anti-WTO and anti-globalization movement. A stark example of the conflict and resistance was clearly seen at the third WTO Ministerial Meeting held in Seattle, USA in 1999 where the official delegates inside and peoples movements outside resisted and made WTO back track from their anti-people policies that entirely undermines developing nations interests.

After Seattle, for the first time during the ninth WTO Ministerial conference held in Bali, Indonesia in 2001, that the capitalist economies succeeded through many manipulations to draft the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) as a new agreement within the WTO. This was in direct violation of the Doha Development Round in 2001 where it had been decided that until pending issues and disagreements were resolved between the developing and developing nations no new agreements will be initiated in the WTO. But the USA and its allies forced developing countries to accept the TFA as a new agreement.

The Bali Ministerial was a big setback for the anti-globalization movement because it allowed capitalist economies to fast track their exports. TFA enforces developing countries to implement policies that allow a fast and smooth transport and transaction of goods at the custom check posts of countries. This agreement will be fully enforced if two third of WTO members will ratify it.¹ According to news reports, Pakistan has ratified the TFA in October

2015 and has become the 50th country that has ratified this agreement.² During the Bali WTO Ministerial India and other developing countries strongly resisted this initiative of the US and its allies. However, Pakistan was a keen supporter of US. To break the impasse, a peace clause was offered. The context of the A peace clause like this would ensure that developing countries are not challenged by the WTO dispute settlement panel even if their domestic support to farmers crosses the limits prescribed. In essence, the peace clause would allow developing countries to stockpile food stock for a limited period so that they could ensure food supplied for their population. The developing countries wanted to have food stocks for a longer period but this was not agreed to.

One can notice US eagerness for the TFA. According to the USAID, it has helped Afghanistan in negotiating the Afghanistan Pakistan Transit and Trade Agreement (APTTA). According to the Government of Afghanistan, APTTA will allow Afghan to access the Indian and Chinese markets. This agreement also allows Afghan products to be taken by road routes across Pakistan to two of its ports namely Gwader and Karachi. It is worth mentioning that at the moment much of the goods that are being transported to Afghanistan is basically for the US troops based in Afghanistan.

The USAID has also initiated a project called Pakistan Trade Project (PTP)³ in Pakistan and Trade and Accession for Afghanistan (TAFA).⁴ A clear objective of TAFA is to assist Afghanistan's accession to the WTO, and to increase Afghanistan's trade capacity. Another objective of both projects is to accelerate clearance of goods and transport on the borders of Pakistan and Afghanistan. It is worth questioning US interest in clearing trade bottlenecks in the Pakistan Afghanistan region. It is possible that the US wants these facilities to move its own products from central Asia to South Asia and from South Asia to Central Asia? Given that Afghanistan has rudimentary trade such acute attention on such a small economy is worth pondering.

Given the close economic and military ties that Pakistan has with the US, especially in context to Afghanistan also explains Pakistan's open support for the Trade Facilitation Agreement in the WTO.

What is to be expected from the upcoming tenth WTO Ministerial to be held in Nairobi, Kenya? There is no doubt that further trade liberalization and market access is on the books.

Since 2014 a total of 14 rounds of negotiations have been held. Furthermore, the US has decided recently in 2015 that India Brazil and China can no longer be classified as developing countries, irrespective of the fact that these countries house a majority of the marginalized people in the world.⁵ One can understand the reason behind this move, since India has played a critical role in resisting the TFA two years ago and the US may fear that India would take similar tough positions in the 2015 WTO Ministerial as in 2013.

According to Deborah James of Our World is Not For Sale, “The whole world is watching as world leaders from nearly every country across the globe meet in Paris this week to set carbon emission reductions targets to address global climate change. Unfortunately representatives of 50 of the same governments are also meeting this week in Geneva to negotiate binding rules that will seriously constrain countries' ability to meet those targets”.⁶

There is news of ongoing negotiations for a new agreement in the WTO, the Trade in Services Agreement (TISA). According to Wiki leaks, this negotiation is still being kept a secret. The member state who are part of the TISA negotiations are Australia, Canada, Chile, Chinese Taipei (Tiwan), Colombia, Costa Rica, Hong Kong China, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Liechtenstein, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, South Korea, Switzerland, Turkey, the USA and the European Union, including its 28 member state.

TISA in fact is an extension of WTO GATTS agreement. According to wiki leaks, “The GATS gave government’s flexibility to list the services that would be subject to the core rules, and further limit their exposure in those sectors (a ‘*positive list*’ approach). The new elements of TISA build on the GATS-plus rules in Korea-US Free Trade Agreement, and those proposed in the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) and the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)”.⁷

It’s the same TPP against which had been heavily critiqued earlier. Pro-peoples groups were on the streets to protest against this deal. It is feared that many developing nation’s economies will suffer further atrocities and face further erosion of their livelihoods by the new trade deal.⁸

India and Brazil are strongly opposing the idea of TISA. In addition, even though China wants to be part of TISA, but has been blocked by the USA.⁹

There is no doubt that the WTO, and other bilateral, regional or multilateral trade agreements that are being negotiated to increase corporate monopoly will only result in further expanding capitalist control and hegemony. The only way out for people to safe guard their lives and livelihood is to build resistances so that corrosive organizations like the WTO can be dismantled. Our path is clear: we need to build our momentum in organizing, mobilizing and building our unities, solidarity and strength.



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Roots for Equity was formed in 1997 for working on issues around globalization, to assess its impact on urban and rural working communities, and providing strategic assistance to develop long-term self-sufficiency in communities.

Roots for Equity is committed to highlighting the plight of the most vulnerable, marginalized communities which include religious minorities, Women and children in the rural and urban sector, as well as providing interventions which could help them to increase their economic and political rights to demand a standard of living considered appropriate by the International Human Rights Charter.

Roots for Equity has basically worked at three levels:

- (i) Action research on issues and impacts of globalization;
- (ii) Awareness raising and resistance at the local, national and international level using action research and publications, international networking and mobilizing communities on ground;
- (iii) Providing direct strategic assistance to communities faced with harsh economic, political and social realities of their system to build long-term sustainability.

This three-pronged approach has proven successful in allowing Roots for Equity to be well grounded in the communities where it has been working.

The most important change for Pakistan is to ensure a people driven base for the social and economic development of the country. This is indeed a huge change which is not possible without mobilization of communities themselves. Roots for Equity believes that only socially conscious and politically active communities can demand and achieve social and economic justice. Roots remains committed to being an active part of communities and working with them to achieve political, social and economic justice.