

Media Release

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U.S. Public Interest Groups Call on Bush Administration to Stop Bullying other Countries and to Start Pursuing Responsible Policies at Trade Talks

Cancun, Mexico- U.S. public interest groups today called on the Bush administration to stop its attempts to bully developing countries at the World Trade Organization meeting in Cancun. The organizations also condemned administration trade policies that do not serve the interests of the world community or of the American people.

Among the most criticized tactics of the US delegation are efforts to pressure a block of developing nations to abandon their position on protecting small farmers. "In these times, the United States needs more friends and fewer enemies in the world," said Mark Ritchie, President of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. "U.S. citizens are outraged that the administration would attempt to bully the "Group of 23" who are seeking important changes in farm trade rules."

"The arrogant, heavy-handed, inflexible way U.S. negotiators are conducting themselves here has increased the erosion of any goodwill the other countries might have for the US, building an anti-American sentiment that undermines all U.S. international relations," said Lori Wallach, Director, Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch.

"New Issues" are another of the most contentious areas U.S. negotiators are attempting to forward. "The U.S. environmental community agrees strongly with the Group of 70 that there should be no negotiations on "new issues" such as investment. Investor rules could undermine hard-won protections for our air, water, and forests. The United States should honor the WTO agreement requiring explicit consensus and respect developing country demands to keep these issues off the table," said Daniel Seligman, Director of the Sierra Club's Responsible Trade Program.

Among the U.S. Trade Representative's efforts at the talks is pressing for more countries to open up public services to corporations. "Providing healthcare, education, and water on a for-profit basis may price these basic rights out of the hands of poor women in developing countries," said Marceline White, Director, Global Trade Program, Women's Edge Coalition.

"Like the Administration's failed domestic economic policies, its policy stance at the WTO will provide rich rewards for the largest corporations such as WalMart, while leaving workers and the environment behind," said Gretchen Gordon, Director of the Citizens Trade Campaign, "The Bush WTO agenda will put our domestic laws on the chopping block, increase corporate power at the expense of domestic public interest regulations, speed up the "race to the bottom" for workers, and fail to promote sustainable, equitable, and democratic development."

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