

JOINT ZAMBIA CIVIL SOCIETY STATEMENT ON THE COLLAPSE OF THE DOHA ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS

The revived World Trade Organisations negotiations under the Doha Development Round have collapsed after seven years without concluding on agriculture and non –agriculture market access (NAMA) as well as Singapore issues. The Doha Development Agenda were declared at the fourth ministerial conference in Doha, Qatar 2001. Among other issues, members were attempting to strike agreements on framework 'modalities' for agriculture and non-agricultural market access (NAMA) which included formulae and figures that would determine countries' future subsidy and tariff levels. However, after nine days of intense negotiations, there were no major movements from the major players with regard to the level of market access for the agriculture products as well as non agricultural goods.

The major powers have been trying to push in the raw deal of market access in agriculture, industry and services. Developed countries especially the United States, the European Union among others have been pushing for further liberalisation and opening up of the poor countries market without reciprocal reduction in the level of subsidies they allocate to their agriculture sector.

WHAT CAUSED THE BREAK THIS TIME?

Whilst major strides were made during the negotiations, members failed to agree on certain issues fundamental to the poor countries especially agriculture Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM). The SSM provides countries with the right to increase tariffs to curb an import surge in order to protect a domestic industry from short-term swings in global markets. This is a crucial instrument for developing countries to promote rural development, food security and standards of living. SSM and special products were not the only sticking point in the agriculture negotiations. Other issues like sensitive products and trade distorting support (subsidies) were tabled for members to reach an agreement.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNT

The collapse of the Doha Development Round provides major lessons for both developed and poor countries especially. In particular, the European Union (EU) and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries with regard to the EPA. The EU and ACP have been negotiating a free trade arrangement based on the principle of reciprocity. The EPA negotiations like the Doha Development Round of negotiations have been a process of negotiation that has been marred by hidden agenda from the European Union to the extent of including Singapore issues that are not supposed to be part of the bilateral agreements.

The EU has been seen to place more emphasis on the time frame to sign the agreements than consider the issues and capacity constraints affecting the poor countries. Still more, the various attempts to include sensitive issues such as services in the EPA negotiations should not be floated as they are yet to be comprehensively concluded in the WTO.

EXPECTATION OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY

The civil society organisation have been calling for fair trade policies that address problems facing the poor countries to access developed countries markets especially in the area of

agriculture. Agriculture is an important sector to alleviate poverty in least developed and developing countries. If, for example, the developed countries cannot reduce the level of subsidies they give to their farmers; least developed and developing countries ability to trade is undermined. Civil Society call for the removal of subsidies that have trade distorting effects on the development of sectors in developing and under developed countries. We further call for support in developing the capacity of sectors to compete in international markets through trade. Lastly, CSO's call for fair trade where least developed and developing countries do not have to give up more at the expense of the people to benefit a little from developed countries.

WAY FORWARD

As a way forward the civil society organisations in Zambia are calling for the serious relook at the contentious issues of subsidies especially by the developed countries and go back to the table as soon as possible for the benefit of restoring confidence in the multilateral trading systems. Further the decision by the EU to cut farm tariffs by an average of 60% is a good sign but not sufficient to address problems facing the poor countries in accessing their markets. This should also be emulated by other developed countries like the US, Japan and others.

Lack of progress in the Doha round of negotiations has gravely undermined poor country's opportunity to achieve a fair trade that would address trade imbalances. Hence, the need for flexibility on the part of the developed countries to reconsider their positions with regard to special safeguard mechanisms, special products , sensitive products and other trade distorting subsidies.

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