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News hook: all media covering WTO Cancún Ministerial, 10-14 September

## **Cancún crisis threatens end to WTO legitimacy**

The WTO's legitimacy has been called into question as it enters the final stages of the Fifth Ministerial Conference in Cancún. The draft Ministerial text currently under discussion has blatantly disregarded the views of developing countries, leaving only the wishes of the richest countries represented.

Many developing countries have levelled serious accusations at the process by which this text has been formulated. Despite the unprecedented political dynamic forged by strong developing country alliances at Cancún, the draft text wholly ignores developing country opposition and launches negotiations on the 'new' issues of investment, government procurement and trade facilitation.

Furthermore, the negotiations which have taken place throughout the night have been characterised by the non-transparent 'green room' process used by the most powerful countries to silence the voices of developing nations. These meetings allow rich countries to exert extreme political pressure on developing countries behind closed doors, as do the one-to-one 'confessionals' in which individual countries are beaten into submission.

Algresia Akwi, director of ActionAid in Africa, said:

"It is an insult that developing countries' proposals have been utterly disregarded here at Cancún. No deal would be better than the deal which is now on the table. The WTO has disenfranchised Africa."

ActionAid calls for the following urgent steps to be taken:

- The Cancún Ministerial text must be overhauled to incorporate the views of developing countries. The current draft, catering only to the needs of the richest countries, is wholly unacceptable.
- The Cancún Ministerial must drop new issues, as there is clearly no 'explicit consensus' to launch negotiations on those issues, as required by the Doha Ministerial Declaration.
- Any decision to extend the Ministerial past its scheduled close must be taken by the entire WTO membership, not announced by the WTO Secretariat out of nowhere, as happened at the last conference in Doha.

Adriano Campolina Soares, head of ActionAid's international campaign, said:

“The credibility of the WTO as an institution is at stake. This was the WTO's last chance to redeem itself and provide some hope for developing countries. Barring a last-minute U-turn, Cancún will establish the WTO as the enemy of the world's poorest people.”

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

**For more information or interviews, please contact: Hannah Crabtree in Cancún, tel: +52 998 107 6303 (local mobile), or +44 7734 581 738**

**In Cancún the ActionAid team is staying at the Best Western – Cancún Clipper Club, Boulevard Kukulcan. KM 9, Hotel Zone, Cancún. Tel: +52 998 891 5999.**