

# **Doha: Saving the WTO, Killing Democracy**

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Doha was described by Robert Zoellick, the U.S. Trade Representative, as having "removed the stain of Seattle". Seattle stands as a historical watershed, through which citizens mobilised democratically to respond to free-trade treaties and agendas of corporate globalisation.

W.T.O., like NAFTA, FTAA is designed to exclude democratic decision making in economic affairs. At the domestic level, W.T.O. destroys economic democracy through rules that prevent people, parliaments and governments from providing economic security and livelihoods and jobs for their people.

It undermines economic sovereignty and national constitutions by usurping the space of national decision making as it did on issues of IPRs, Agriculture, Services & Investment in the Uruguay Round, and as it has attempted in Doha on issues of natural resources, investment, competition, government procurement and trade facilitation. At the international level, W.T.O. is loaded in process and content by the agenda of the rich and powerful corporations and countries.

Seattle stopped the enlargement of this undemocratic structure and its undemocratic processes. People from across the world, and governments of poor countries stopped a new round from being launched. W.T.O's failure was democracy's victory. This victory of democracy is being described by Zoellick as the "stain of Seattle". Removing the "stain" of democracy is what Doha was designed for and achieved.

First, Doha was chosen as a venue to escape from popular response of citizens mobilising on a large scale as they did in Seattle, Gothenberg, Genoa.

The democratic expression of civil society was attempted to be muffled by the location and restrictions on visas. The democratic rights of poor countries were extinguished by bulldozing, armtwisting, undemocratic and non-democratic processes for which W.T.O. has become famous.

Doha's success was based on democratic failure. W.T.O. which had been derailed in Seattle by the combined force of people and developing countries was, "put on track" in Doha, according to Pascal Lamy, the E.U. trade commissioner.

During his trip to India immediately after Doha for the E.U. India business Summit, Pascal Lamy admitted that W.T.O. is a "medieval" institution in desperate need for reform, but a new round had to be launched before the reform process otherwise W.T.O. could have been destroyed.

This is like arguing that an infectious disease must be allowed to spread because curing it might kill the infectious agent. If reform of a diseased organisation is not possible, then we need to build healthier and more democratic institutions. Democracy cannot be systematically throttled to save undemocratic institutions. Saving democracy should be the criteria, not saving W.T.O.

Pascal Lamy has described the new round launched at Doha as a new global deal on Trade, Development and Environment. The "global deal" is the enlargement and acceleration of perverse and polarising globalisation. It is a "deal" in which the rich grab more from the poor instead of giving more.

Development has been reinterpreted to mean trade liberalisation and environment is being reinterpreted to mean free trade in natural resources. Unfortunately the very meaning and content of "development" and "environment" is being forced to undergo change.

Development means self-generative, self-determined growth of an organism, a society, or a country. It was used to refer to actions taken by governments in an effort to improve people's well-being by ensuring their basic needs of livelihoods -- food, water, health and education are met. It was used by poor countries in trade negotiations at W.T.O. to refer to the basic needs of their people.

"Development" has been redefined by the rich countries to further globalisation and unrestricted growth of trade. Even development aid is targeted at promotion of "free" trade. After Doha, the slogan of "trade, not aid" has been altered to "aid for trade" which in effect means using tax payer's money as subsidies for exports and conditionalities for trade liberalisation.

In other words, rich countries are to use their citizens money to subsidise corporate, commercial activity. The poor in poor countries have disappeared from the "development" equation.

For Pascal Lamy and the European Commission, Doha was a "development round." "Development" has been redefined as "trade liberalisation" and economic reform for corporate welfare and the welfare of the rich. While addressing the E.U. India Business Summit in New Delhi on 22nd November 2001, Lamy referred to the EU-India cooperation in Science and Technology, Trade and Investment and said,

All this is part of our natural effort to get in place the type of "software" that facilitates the everyday life of people like you, business people, who work on turning our aspirations into reality: namely to exchange goods and services that our consumers want, and to undertake the investments that are needed to produce these goods and services, at prices and quality standards that are competitive internationally.

Notice the mutation of the development agenda -- India has been reduced to her business people who can export good and services to Europe. Her women, her children, her peasants, tribals, craftspeople, workers and their basic rights have all disappeared.

India's production is not for creating livelihoods for the Indian people or creating livelihoods for the Indian people or meeting their basic needs. India must produce for rich European

consumers, and "undertake investments" not for her people's development but for commercial interests and the growth of consumerism in the North. And she must provide goods and services to the rich in the North at "internationally competent prices" -- not at just and fair prices that respect workers rights, ensure just wages and defend people's livelihoods.

In other words, India's workers and farmers must become poorer, her women and children must starve, so that the rich can buy goods and services more cheaply and commercial profits can increase. For this to happen, trade and investment must be further deregulated and "liberalised", labour laws must be dismantled and labour markets deregulated.

Corporations should have more freedom to make super-profits, and public money of the North and South should be redirected from support to the poor to a subsidy for rich corporations and rich consumers. This is the new "development agenda" of the rich.

Instead of development being sovereign, self-determined provisioning of basic needs for the poor, Doha has formalised development as exploiting the labour and resources of the poor to provide cheap goods and services for the rich.

The "development agenda" of Doha is in fact an anti-development agenda based on transforming natural resources and labour of the South into environmental and social subsidies for wasteful consumption and non-sustainable commerce.

Unfortunately even though it was India's Commerce Minister Musoli Maran who fought hardest against further liberalisation of trade and investment in Doha, his first announcement on returning to India was to accelerate the pace of economic reforms and liberalise investments.

If liberalisation of trade and investment is destructive of Third World people's livelihoods and well-being, and that is why it is resisted by countries like India in W.T.O., Mr. Maran's commitment to "autonomous reforms" to implement the very agenda he resisted and got deferred in Doha is like committing suicide because you have been threatened with murder. Murder threats need to be responded by heightened protection, not self-annihilation.

The people of India reject the imposition of irresponsible commerce and corporate globalisation by W.T.O., or by government, because the impact on people is the same -- more farmers committing suicide, more children dying of hunger, more violence against women, more workers without jobs.

That is why a very broad alliance of "Indian People's Campaign against WTO" has been formed which held a rally of more than 100,000 people on 6th Nov, before Doha, and after Doha told the government that its globalisation policies would be strongly resisted. The people of India will define and shape their own development, based on sustainability and justice.

People's rights to natural resources and livelihoods is at the heart of the development agenda of the poor in India. It is also at the heart of our environment agenda. It is the poorest of Indian communities who fight hardest to defend their seeds, their forests, their land, their rivers.

For us environment is not a luxury, but the very basis of survival. That is why international environmental agreements like the Montreal Protocol on Ozone depleting substances, the Basel Convention, banning trade in toxics, the Rio Convention on Biological Diversity and Climate Change and the Biosafety protocol to regulate GMOs and the Kyoto protocol to reduce CO2 emissions are such important instruments of environmental justice for us.

However, in Doha a distorted attempt was made to reduce the environmental agenda to an agenda of the rich -- of appropriating the natural resources of the poor for commercial profit and making commerce take precedence over conservation.

Patents and Biopiracy are the instruments promoted and legitimatised by the rich country IPR systems and the TRIPs agreement of W.T.O. for take-over of the natural wealth of biodiversity which is the livelihood base of the two thirds of humanity in the Third World.

Even though Article 27.3 (b) of TRIPs which imposes patents on life, establishes corporate monopolies on seeds and plant varieties, and enables biopiracy was to have been reviewed and reformed in accordance to a mandatory review started 2 years ago, no corrections were made in TRIPs in Doha to change the distorted, perverse, unjust and unethical system of IPRs it forces on people.

Much PR mileage has been claimed by W.T.O and rich countries on a TRIPs declaration related to public health. However, Doha failed to legally modify TRIPs to protect farmers' right to seed and the integrity of biodiversity, and indigenous knowledge systems.

Two-thirds of the health care in Third World societies is based on biodiversity-based indigenous medical systems. Biopiracy of the plants and knowledge which are the basis of indigenous health care is also a threat to public health. The legal reform and correction of TRIPs to stop biopiracy of the intellectual and biodiversity wealth of the Third World continues to be blocked by rich countries. This is the incomplete agenda of modifying TRIPs that needs to be completed.

The environment movement in the South and the North has been among the strongest critics of free trade and globalisation because of its impact on the environment. The streets of Seattle were full of environmental activists. The Doha declaration is a desperate attempt by governments to subvert the environment movement and the Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs), and to promote free trade in natural resources.

The problem with the Trade and Environment agenda of the Doha Round is not that environment will be used to restrict free trade but that it will be used to expand free trade to cover water, and other "environmental goods and services" as the U.S. proposed para 31(iii) of the Doha declaration states. Doha's environmental agenda threatens to become an anti-environment agenda if the environmental movements of South and North are not vigilant.

One of the major reasons for the collapse of the Seattle negotiations was the attempt by U.S. to drag the environmental issue of the ecological risks of GMOs into W.T.O. while the developing countries and E.U. wanted it covered by the Biosafety protocol of Convention on Biological Diversity. If Biosafety issues related to GMOs are primarily determined by the

free trade rules of W.T.O., they will be viewed as non-tariff trade barriers and will be diluted.

If, on the other hand, CBD and environmental criteria take precedence, trade rules will have to change to ensure regulation for Biosafety. By usurping the MEA agenda at Doha, W.T.O. could undermine the environmental treaties. The outcome of Rio needs to be defended at Rio+10 at Johannesburg.

The Earth Summit needs to set the agenda for environmental reform of W.T.O. not *vice versa*. Over the next two years, before the Fifth Ministerial, environment and development groups and movements need to build up enough public pressure and public opinion to promote environmental and sustainable development goal, and reform of global institutions and trade treaties to reach those goals. Transformation of W.T.O. rules and structures will have to be an important part of this agenda.

The work of Seattle needs to continue. It is the undemocratic stain of Doha product and process which needs to be removed. This requires a reinvigoration of the new democracy movement which has so far been referred to only negatively as the anti-globalisation movement.

The agenda for the new democracy movement will, at a minimum, need to include:

1. The democratic right of citizens and countries to restrict imports to defend livelihoods and prevent the impoverishment of people.
2. The democratic right of citizens and countries to regulate trade and commerce to defend people's rights to natural resources and prevent ecological destruction.
3. The right of people of all countries to food sovereignty, water sovereignty and biodiversity sovereignty, the reclaiming water and biodiversity as commons, and food as a basic need.
4. The democratic right of people to regulate investment for ecological and social justice.
5. The democratic right of people to not allow public wealth and tax payers money to subsidise corporations. Public wealth must be used for public good, not private gain.

In terms of changes in W.T.O. rules this implies:

1. The sovereign rights of countries to impose Quantitative Restrictions on Imports.
2. MEAs have precedence over W.T.O. rules.
3. A "food security" or "development" box is introduced in the A.A. before the next Ministerial to exempt countries from trade rules on ground of food security and livelihood security for farmers.
4. The TRIPs review is completed before the Fifth Ministerial to make patents on life, seed monopolies and biopiracy illegal.
5. Water is not allowed to be covered under para 32(iii) of the Doha Declaration.
6. No Investment Agreement or Negotiations in W.T.O.