

**OPEN LETTER OF EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY  
GROUPS TO COMMISSIONER LAMY AND  
DESIGNATE COMMISSIONER MANDELSON**



*icda*



**solidar**

**WIDE**



Brussels, 15 November 2004

### **Joint letter from European NGOs on the DG-Trade Civil Society Process**

The undersigned Organisations from the non-profit side of European Civil Society welcome the invitation of Commissioner Lamy to take stock of the Civil Society Dialogue process to date. In the following we want to make a contribution to the debate and give recommendations to the incoming trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson on how to improve the process.

Overall we see the more systematic dialogue process as a major improvement in the relations between Civil Society and the Commission. Notably the support for travel costs proved useful to increase the participation from organisations and networks based in member states in EU wide discussions.

We therefore commend Commissioner Lamy for having initiated this dialogue and welcome initial remarks by Peter Mandelson that he intends to continue dialogue with Civil Society.

However, we strongly feel that the current process needs significant improvement to live up to its claim to be a real “dialogue”. So far the dialogue sessions mainly have the character of briefings, or more precisely debriefings, from EC negotiators on recent developments in the WTO and other negotiation processes. While the participants from the EC are generally the experts dealing with the issues, there were some disappointing exceptions, e.g. in this year’s dialogue on UNCTAD XI.

In order to ensure a real dialogue on the direction of European Trade Policy, we therefore propose a number of new elements that would enhance the sessions:

- 1) In addition to briefings on the current state of play in the negotiations, the Commission should provide more insights to the EU’s upcoming initiatives and proposals and invite feedback from Civil Society on these. This would allow a more in-depth exchange whether the EU approach in negotiations effectively contributes to the overarching objective of sustainable development. This requires not only an Agenda that puts greater weight on these forward-looking aspects but also, and more importantly, a more open approach from Commission officials.
- 2) In addition to meetings with heads of units and their staff on the one hand and the Commissioner himself on the other, it would be useful to have a regular exchange at the level of directors, the director general and his deputies to discuss more long-term, strategic questions. The contact group, in which meetings of this kind have occasionally been taking place, is not the appropriate forum for this. The representatives of different groups there have a mandate to structure the dialogues and give input on issues to be raised – they cannot and should not try to represent the often non-uniform positions of their constituencies on various issues.

- 3) Members of the Committee 133 and Members of the European Parliaments Trade Committee should also be involved in dialogue with Civil Society. At a minimum they should be informed about the statements made in the dialogue sessions.
- 4) The possibility to pose follow-up questions should be given more systematically, to change the character of the dialogue sessions from (de)briefings to a real dialogue. We would also welcome information on the conclusions the Commission draws from the input of Civil Society.
- 5) Records of the meetings and the Commission's conclusions should be made available to the participants of the Civil Society Dialogue shortly after the meeting.

We believe that a revamped Civil Society Dialogue, which takes on board the suggestions elaborated above, can be a useful element in designing a European Trade Policy that lives up to the expectation of promoting Sustainable Development.

Sincerely,

**Amnesty International**

**Christian Aid**

**Danish 92 Group**

**ETUC, European Trade Union Confederation**

**FoEE, Friends of the Earth Europe**

**Germanwatch**

**ICDA, International Coalition of Development Action**

**ICFTU, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions**

**Solidar**

**WIDE, Women in Development**

**WWF, World Wildlife Fund**