

# TALKING THE TALK, WALKING THE WALK – DEBATING CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE

Brussels, 8 May 2007

## **Experiences and Lessons from DG Trade's Civil Society Dialogue Programme**

### *SESSION 1*

*The Dialogue between DG Trade and civil society: what type of dialogue and how to make it work?*

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Friends of the Earth Europe



**Friends of  
the Earth  
Europe**

## THE FOEE NETWORK

### Friends of the Earth Europe

- campaigns for sustainable and just societies and for the protection of the environment
- unites more than 30 national orgs with thousands of local groups
- is part of the world's largest grassroots environmental network, Friends of the Earth International



Annual General Meeting, Estonia, June 2006



**Friends of  
the Earth  
Europe**

## FOEE'S INVOLVEMENT IN DG TRADE'S CSD PROGRAMME

- Consultation meetings in Bxl
- Contact Group
- EC delegation at WTO Ministerials

**Civil Society Dialogue**



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## DG TRADE'S CSD PROGRAMME THE POSITIVE...

- Regular meetings on various topics
- Information from the source
- Opportunity to raise concerns in public
- Possibility to 'put a face' on EU trade policies
- Travel reimbursement
- Grants



## DG TRADE'S CSD PROGRAMME

### POSITIVE EXAMPLES

- High-ranking officials
- Trade negotiators
- Panel debates/'Ad-hoc' meetings
- Consultations on SIAs



## DG TRADE'S CSD PROGRAMME POSITIVE EFFECTS ON CSOS

- Allows CSOs to meet in Bxl
- Allows CSOs from outside Bxl to meet with EU officials
- Formal → informal
- Prompted debates among European CSOs on policy engagement



## DG TRADE'S CSD PROGRAMME THE NEGATIVE...

- More exchange of views/briefings than real 'dialogue'
- One-offs: no feedback after meetings
- No link with policy-making
- More technical & factual than political
- Unclear definition & representation of CS
- Brussels-centred



## DG TRADE'S CSD PROGRAMME

### NEGATIVE EXAMPLES

- New EU FTAs: secret negotiating mandates
- New MA Strategy, early 2007: farcical 'questionnaire'
- Global Europe Conference, 13 November 2006
- Civil society outreach/dialogue *de facto* not centralised in DG Trade



## DG TRADE'S CSD PROGRAMME NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON CSOS

- No 'obligation' of dialogue → consultation 'free-riders'
- Time and resource-demanding for little direct result
- Unmet expectations → Frustration → Mistrust: 'greenwash', communications/PR tool, good governance claims, spin, "buying civil society", etc.



## DG TRADE'S CSD PROGRAMME

### STRUCTURAL IMBALANCES IN POLICY-MAKING

- Undue corporate influence:
  - Privileged Access, e.g.: special advisers, expert groups, high-level working groups, ESF cocktails, BusinessEurope conferences and lunches...
  - 'Revolving Doors'
  - Etc.
- Institutionalised lobbying
- Intransparent decisions
- Ideological wall: free trade



# Thank you!



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