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2005 Geneva Declaration on Trade & Environment

Coordinated by EcoLomics International - Geneva

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January 1, 2005, marks the 10th anniversary of the WTO Agreement's entry into force. The trade regime's evolution from the GATT 1947 to the WTO has resulted in the creation of a very powerful Dispute Settlement Body and a vast enlargement of its mandate. More and more observers are concerned, however, about increasing conflicts between the relatively short-term objectives of economic globalization and the long-term goals of the stewardship of the global ecosystem. As a consequence, the past fifteen years have seen the emergence of the trade & environment community. There is a very wide-spread feeling in this community that trade & environment issues represent the most important missing piece in the accomplishment of the WTO's mandate, and that environmental concerns are not considered a priority by WTO Members in spite of their specific and detailed inclusion in the 2001 Doha Development Agenda (para. 1, 6, 19, 28, 31, 32, 33, 51). This state of affairs has led to a series of discussions and exchanges on this subject which is summarized in the following 10 postulates:

1. The 10 year history of the WTO has shown that multilateral approaches to trade & environment negotiations are preferable, in the perspective of environmental governance, to their most likely alternative, i.e. regional and bilateral approaches. WTO Members therefore need to give greater priority to global environmental concerns at the Committee on Trade and Environment and at several other environment-related discussions and negotiation processes within the WTO as well as at other intergovernmental bodies.
2. In the interpretation of the Committee on Trade and Environment's mandate a flexible and conceptual approach is most appropriate, but concerns of some delegations should be taken into consideration by also stressing the value of national experiences.

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3. The achievement of the Doha Development Agenda requires a mutually supportive deference between WTO Agreements and Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in their respective domains of competence. The relationship between WTO rules and MEAs should be discussed and negotiated in a comprehensive way not limited only to specific trade obligations; the development aspects of the DDA at the same time require much more support, emphasis and concrete targets and timetables.
4. The objectives of sustainable development and of the protection and conservation of the environment as mentioned in the WTO's preamble need to be emphasized and respected. This requires, *inter alia*, that non-trade ministries, parliamentarians and certain NGOs be given a role in the decision-making processes.
5. The 1992 Rio Declaration, especially Principle 4 on the integration of environmental protection in the development process, and Principle 15 on the precautionary approach, need to be fully integrated into the WTO's agreements, interpretations and jurisprudence.
6. Industrialized countries are encouraged to incorporate scientifically sound forecasts into their trade & environment policies. The trade perspectives of transitional economies, developing, and least developed countries are impaired even more by environmental deterioration and therefore need to be improved through special and differential treatment, through trade & environment-related technical assistance, and through capacity building measures and technology transfer.
7. All countries are encouraged to develop integrated trade & environment policies based on the rights and aspirations of the present and future generations. WTO agreements, decisions and case law must not exercise an environmental chilling effect or otherwise diminish the effectiveness of MEAs.
8. The term 'ecolomics' is suggested for the analysis of issues related to the ecology-economics interface in order to facilitate the focus, the structure, and the communication of the discussions and negotiations in this area.
9. UN bodies such as UNEP, FAO, or UNCTAD should be more involved and their role and mandate strengthened in trade & environment discussions and negotiations, for example through badly lacking procedures for regular information exchanges between MEA Secretariats and the relevant WTO committees. Furthermore, the establishment of appropriate criteria for the granting of regular observer status to bodies involved in multilateral environmental negotiations is long overdue.
10. It is clear that the WTO is not considered an environmental organization, but in light of the more and more globalized interdependencies and interactions between human activities and the ecosystem, environmental ramifications of trade need to be better taken into consideration in trade policies and agreements.