

### **3D Information Note 7**

## **Human Rights Body Uneasy About Impacts of CAFTA-DR in Costa Rica**

*Geneva 6 November 2007* – As furore continues in Costa Rica about ratification of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), members of a leading UN human rights body have been expressing their concern to Costa Rican officials today in Geneva, about the human rights impact of the trade agreement.

Members of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Committee, or CESCR) raised concerns about the effects of CAFTA-DR on human rights, particularly on the rights to health, to food and to water, with a Costa Rican delegation this morning.

In response to the question of the extent to which the Costa Rican government plans to compensate those Costa Rican citizens most affected by the trade agreement, the delegation responded that the government will try to ensure that those who would be most adversely affected by CAFTA-DR are compensated so as to suffer less than they would without compensation.

‘Is Costa Rica rushing into the economic development trap without examining the implications on economic, social and cultural rights?’ one Committee member asked.

‘The Committee’s questions to Costa Rica this morning imply that the negotiators of the trade agreement did not sufficiently take their ICESCR obligations into account, as they should have, and that the government should do so now, before CAFTA-DR is ratified,’ said a close observer of the process.

By having ratified international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Costa Rican government has committed itself to guarantee rights including the right to food, water, health, housing and social security to its people, as well as to ensure that policies in all areas – including trade – do not undermine enjoyment of these rights.

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is a body of independent human rights experts, charged with monitoring the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights in the 157 countries around the world that have ratified the ICESCR.

Its meeting with Costa Rica is taking place at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ Palais Wilson, and will continue this afternoon (Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> November) and tomorrow morning (Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> November).

Committee members had before them 3D → Trade - Human Rights - Equitable Economy's Country Briefing entitled *Costa Rica: Strengthening Patent Laws, Weakening Human Rights*, available at [http://www.3dthree.org/pdf\\_3D/3DCESCRCostaRica2.pdf](http://www.3dthree.org/pdf_3D/3DCESCRCostaRica2.pdf) (English) and [http://www.3dthree.org/pdf\\_3D/3DCESCRCostaRicaEs.pdf](http://www.3dthree.org/pdf_3D/3DCESCRCostaRicaEs.pdf) (Spanish).

Information about the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, can be found at <http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/index.htm>

3D -> Trade - Human Rights - Equitable Economy (3D) is a non-profit organization based in Geneva, Switzerland, working to ensure that trade rules are developed and applied in ways that promote an equitable economy. We believe that human rights mechanisms such as the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights can help attain this objective by ensuring that States do not allow international trade rules to hinder compliance with human rights obligations.

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