

## **WTO Director General Candidates Seek to Woo Civil Society**

Geneva – For the first time in the World Trade Organization’s history, candidates for the institution’s top position today accepted civil society organizations’ invitation to discuss their vision for world trade. The civil society hearing for WTO Director General candidates was organized by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Oxfam International, and 3D → Trade - Human Rights - Equitable Economy.

The current Director General of the WTO is Supachai Panitchpakdi. His term ends on August 31, 2005. There are four candidates to replace him. Three of the four candidates attended the civil society hearing: Pascal Lamy of France, Jaya Krishna Cuttaree of Mauritius, and Luiz Felipe de Seixas Corrêa of Brazil. Carlos Perez del Castillo of Uruguay was unable to attend.

During the meeting, termed as a “beauty contest’ by Lamy, the candidates responded to questions on their commitment to improve transparency within the WTO, the negative impacts of the world trading system, the role of the Director General in gaining an agreement at the next WTO Ministerial, safeguards against the increasing market power of multinational corporations, and helping farmers in developing countries who have been hurt by agricultural trade.

“It is a major step forward that the candidates have chosen to make their views known to a wider group of stakeholders before a decision is made” said IATP’s President Mark Ritchie.

“It is a tribute to civil society efforts that D-G candidates are willing to defend their views before the general public.” said Caroline Dommen. “WTO officials were dismissive of civil society in the past. NGO scrutiny of trade policy has shown that the world is watching. It’s achieved at least some sense of accountability.”

All three candidates present agreed that civil society relations enriched the work of the WTO, and would continue links with NGOs if appointed to the top job.

The new WTO Director General faces several difficult challenges. He must try to usher through the Doha Round of negotiations, which fell apart at the last WTO Ministerial in Cancun. Negotiations are currently held together by a fragile framework agreement agreed to last July. The new Director General must try to prevent the upcoming Ministerial in Hong Kong in December from ending in another failure. And must try to bridge the gap between developed and developing countries on a number of hot button trade issues.

The hearing is available for viewing on the web site of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy - [www.iatp.org](http://www.iatp.org).

Full transcript available from tomorrow

Quotes available.

Press Release from Oxfam, IATP and 3D → Trade - Human Rights - Equitable Economy.  
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