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WTO Summit in Buenos Aires: “Illegitimate from Day One”

By Global Justice Now
Global Research, December 09, 2017
Global Justice Now 8 December 2017

Region: Latin America & Caribbean
Theme: Global Economy, Law and Justice

Campaigners slam president Macri’s ‘draconian summit’ as civil society delegates returned from airport

Call for no deal on ‘new issues’ like e-commerce

Statement on the World Trade Organisation’s 11th Ministerial Summit in Buenos Aries, Argentina, which takes place from 10-13 December 2017.

On the summit:

> “President Macri has excelled in his draconian approach to this summit. We’ve never before seen such a silencing and censoring of civil society voices. His attempts to block over 60 experts and campaigners from the host country are unprecedented, with observers now being returned home from the airport. This disgraceful display of power shows that Argentina should not host the G20 summit next year – Macri is unfit for that responsibility.”

On food and agriculture:

> “The WTO’s rules on agriculture are pretty much the definition of double standards. We support India in standing up for its right to reduce poverty through protecting the food prices paid by its citizens. All countries should have this right. We absolutely reject the position of the US and EU in trying to clamp down on these poverty-reducing policies – but especially so when they show such hypocrisy. No one protects agriculture more than the US and EU. It’s time to end a system which means one rule for the rich and another for the poor.”

On e-commerce:

> “The big new issue this year is e-commerce – supposedly making it easier to trade online across borders. But the e-commerce agenda is really about the power of Amazon, Google and the big tech companies. These gigantic corporations profit from data, the ‘new oil’ of the global economy, and they want rules to ensure they can use and abuse this data as they wish – moving it around the world without restriction or responsibility. This stops countries being able to adequately tax and regulate these companies so that all can benefit from new technology. It is also a disaster for our privacy and ability to control our data.”

On fisheries:

> "Overfishing is a massive, global problem, but the approach of rich countries to simply lay down blanket rules on subsidies isn't the answer. This is likely to reduce support for small, artisanal fisherfolk, who are not part of the problem at all, while continuing to allow industrial scale scouring of the ocean floors."

On development:

> "Agreement at the WTO broke down over 15 years ago because rich countries passed everything they wanted and ignored the needs of everyone else. If we're to have global trade rules they need to work for the poorest most of all. In fact, they have simply become a way for big business to tell everyone else how to behave. We absolutely reject the opening of any new issues at the WTO before the development promises of a previous generation have been fulfilled."

Source

Members of the Global Justice Now delegation are among the 63 civil society actors from 20 organisations who were last week banned from attending the summit by the government of Argentina. Petter Titland from Attac Norway has already been deported from the country. See this.

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