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TPP Trade Talks Must Stop

The ITUC and the ACTU have called on governments to stop negotiations on the “Trans-Pacific Partnership” agreement, criticising the secrecy and corporate bias in the current negotiations.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said “This secretive trade deal is good for some multinational corporations, but deeply damaging to ordinary people and the very role of governments. Corporate interests are at the negotiating table, but national parliaments and other democratic actors are being kept in the dark. What we do know, much of it through leaks, is that this proposed deal is not about ensuring better livelihoods for people, but about giving multinational companies a big boost to profits. Governments should shut down the negotiations, and not re-open them unless they get genuine and transparent public mandates at home that put people’s interest in the centre.”

Australian Council of Trade Unions President Ged Kearney called on Prime Minister Abbott to be upfront with workers about the detail of the TPP.

“If this deal was as good as Mr Abbott says it is, he would be out telling workers all about it – but he isn’t,” Ms Kearney said.

“Workers have good reason to be worried about the trade deals Mr Abbott is negotiating given until now he hasn’t protected Australian jobs, he has made it easier for foreign workers to come to Australia and he is actively pushing for cuts to wages and conditions.”

The current TPP proposals include provisions which would:

- Make governments submit to so-called investor to state dispute settlement (ISDS) procedures whereby investors can sue governments on a wide range of policies, including environmental and social policies ;
- Introduce patent protections that would boost pharmaceutical companies’ profits, but put vital medicines out of reach for millions of poorer people;
- Severely restrict governments’ ability to make national laws for public health, safety and general welfare with a ‘regulatory coherence’ chapter;
- Stop governments from giving priority to public policy aims when making decisions about public procurement;
- Impose a series of restrictions on governments’ abilities to regulate the financial sector, thus holding back efforts to reform damaging financial speculation and impeding governments from taking measures to maintain their balance of payment.

Proposals for protection of workers’ rights have met with heavy resistance from some countries, and appear to not cover all ILO Conventions that establish Fundamental Rights at Work or subnational (state and province) labour legislation. The proposals also contain no enforcement for environmental provisions, and fail to address the need for action to mitigate climate change.

“A fair and open global trading system is essential to prosperity, but this proposed TPP is nothing of the sort. Global and regional trade needs to create jobs and prosperity for the many, not just provide welfare for corporations and transfer more power from the parliaments to the boardroom,” said Ms Burrow.

Trade unions in the countries negotiating the TPP are today formally calling on their governments to stop the negotiations, and to seek a proper negotiation mandate if they are to engage in the negotiations again.

The trade unions that support this call are: Australia, ACTU; Canada, CSN y CSD; Japan, JTUC-RENGO; Mexico, UNT; New Zealand, NZCTU; Peru, CUT y CATP; United States, AFL-CIO. Some of these trade unions, as well as the unions of Chile (CUT-Chile) and Malaysia (MTUC) had asked for the negotiations to stop at an earlier stage.

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