

Civil Society Press Release April 25th 2012

The debate around mandate is the developed countries' refusal to acknowledge the roots of crises and the ways forward

Discussions this week have focused on UNCTAD's role and effectiveness. These debates hide the real issue: developed countries disagree with UNCTAD's political perspective. UNCTAD has uncovered the roots, and offers a strategic direction for resolving, the financial and economic crisis. Developed countries cannot accept this; to do so would mean acknowledging that their policies were at fault. Rather than openly disagreeing with UNCTAD's analysis, these countries are fighting a proxy war. By saying UNCTAD could be more efficient if it had a smaller mandate allows swathes of text to be deleted, mostly in analysis related to the impacts of crises on people living in poverty. Civil society is shocked: how is it possible to develop effective solutions without an effective analysis?

Currently, under the wishes of JUSSKANNZ and the EU, issues which threaten to push millions further into poverty will be ignored. It is proving too hard to reach agreement around the existence and roots of the financial crisis. The food, energy and climate crises and their impact, as well as the impact of debt and finance on sustainable development, are scarcely acknowledged - text outlining that food price volatility has led to 'issues of hunger and food insecurity' has been deleted.

The pattern is repeated across the international institutions in a crisis of multilateralism. Unrepresentative organisations such as the IMF receive extra funding and continue to produce recommendations which put millions of men and women at risk, while UNCTAD's work is reduced on the pretext of efficiency.

Civil society wants to see a stronger UNCTAD emerge from the negotiations: a relevant, pertinent UNCTAD that is able to continue to contribute alternative analysis and thinking, and is able to offer strategic direction to addressing the global crises. Yet rather than offering a stronger vision, the outcome document is weakened. Debates around the roots of global crises have manifested in multiple contradictions within the text.

Civil society is shocked as solutions are offered which renege on countries' own policies. For example, the EU wants to delete references to 'medicine at affordable prices', which goes against European Parliamentary resolutions. In places the text verges on the ridiculous. It is ironic that JUSSKANNZ is objecting to foreign investors having to comply with domestic legislative frameworks when, for example, Australia is currently being sued by Philip Morris (who claims the laws violate its rights as a foreign investor) for its plain packaging laws for cigarettes.

Current proposals go even against recommendations within the UN General Assembly, where, for example, resolution 66/188 paragraph 5 invites UNCTAD to *continue* research and analysis on price volatility in food and related financial and commodity markets.

For civil society, the huge contradictions in the outcome document represent a worrying sign that there is insufficient will to find alternative solutions to global crises.

Contacts: For English: Lidy Nacpil (lnacpil@gmail.com) / For Arabic: Kinda Mohamadieh (kinda_mohamadieh@hotmail.com) / For French: Mamadou Ndiaye (mndiaye@ofadec.org)