

Turnaround Statement

New Multilateral Trade Rules for People-Centered Shared Prosperity and Sustainable Development

A PHM workshop designed to explore the OWINFS
Turnaround Statement and its relevance to Health for All and
for PHM networks

Panel

- Panelists

- Ron Labonté, PHM and University of Ottawa ([more](#))
- Jane Nalunga, [SEATINI](#), Uganda ([more](#))
- Sanya Reid Smith, [TWN](#), Penang

- Facilitator

- David Legge, [PHM Trade & Health Thematic Circle](#), (also [report from PHA4](#))

- Technical

- Jyotsna Singh
- Priyam Liz Cherian

The Turn Around Statement

- About OWINFS ([here](#))
- About the Statement
 - Challenging the liberalised trade regime created through the various WTO agreements
 - Targeting the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) which will take place from 30 November to 3 December 2021 in Geneva
 - Collecting signatures from international, regional and national organisations
 - Calling for members of WTO (countries/governments) to imagine – and strive for – a global regime of economic governance which is sustainable, socially just, democratic and accountable
- Our questions
 - Why should we participate?
 - How can we contribute?

Plan for workshop

- Introductions
- Overview of the Statement
- Discussion of the issues
- Discussion of next steps

The statement

- Critique
- The Call
- Specific Demands

Critique: the neoliberal economy

- corporate elites have hijacked “trade” to rig the rules of the multilateral system to distribute income upwards, while ... the majority of people have experienced increased trade as a race to the bottom on wages, precarity, public services, consumer standards and the environment
- the specific system of rules embodied in the WTO [have] failed to deliver development, promote shared prosperity, and ensure sustainability in trade
- corporations ... invest in dominating the policymaking process, particularly through the WTO as well as bilateral and regional trade agreements, and investment agreements, to ensure that policies shape the economy to distribute income to them
- while the current WTO rules may have created more predictability for investors and trading corporations, workers and communities face increasing precarious work, outsourcing, cuts to public services and a race to the bottom

Critique

- Covid
 - deeply integrated supply chains created by WTO rules over the past several decades have undermined numerous countries' fights against the global COVID-19 pandemic
- Agriculture
 - WTO rules on agriculture limit countries' ability to protect their own rural development, farmers' livelihoods, and food security and sovereignty ... and have contributed to multiple food crises and eroded net food security in many countries
- Global warming
 - WTO rules ... facilitate high-carbon production systems while limiting green technology transfer

Critique: democracy and human rights

- corporations, through 'trade' agreements, amass rights at the expense ... of democratic states ... has resulted in an erosion of democracy
- The state has a primary obligation to realize the human rights of its citizens. [To do so it needs to be able] to adapt to future challenges; exercise policy prerogatives; establish, maintain and expand public services; and freely regulate capital. The current trade regime ... subverts [these functions] to the logic and needs of commerce.

Critique: WTO structures and practices

- Exclusion of civil society participation in policy making in WTO “while many corporate representatives have close access to the policymaking process, including the drafting of many agreement text”
- Secretariat actively engaging in partnerships with the global corporate community to increase its influence
- the Dispute Settlement Mechanism (DSM) adjudicates cases using rules that privilege corporate trading rights over the public interest: in 80 cases involving public interest policies, the WTO ruled in favor of corporations’ right to trade 73 times

The Call

- a new vision for multilateralism ... a new set of rules for governing global trade
- a fundamentally new institution
- Special and Differential Treatment rules must be strengthened and operationalized for all developing countries
- governments {must} enjoy policy space to ensure domestic food security; to utilize technology transfer and data rights; to make use of job-creating performance requirements such as local content and local labor requirements; and have more flexibility to ensure affordable access to medicines
- halt to efforts to expand the scope and coverage of existing harmful rules, or to expand them to new arenas
- we need a system that ... allows countries the policy space to pursue ... decent job creation and industrialization; and holds corporations accountable
- Call ... for the immediate adoption of a Binding Treaty on Transnational Corporations and Human Rights

Specific demands

1. Decent work and industrial development policy space
2. Policy space for digital industrialization and the ability to use data for the public interest
3. The right to protect the policy space for development
4. Access to health and affordable medicines, not patent monopolies
5. Trade rules that support food security and food sovereignty
6. Protection of biodiversity and the banning of the patenting of life
7. Financial stability instead of financial deregulation
8. That trade rules not limit the role of the democratic state to provide universal quality public services nor limit regulation of the economy in the public interest
9. The WTO is not the venue to establish climate change policy
10. The WTO, including the secretariat, must stop secretive, undemocratic functioning

Next steps

- Sign on to the Statement
- Encourage others to do so
 - Reach out to networks with specific sectoral interests (unions, agriculture, gender, etc)
- Urge Trade Ministers to read the Statement and use it in their Interventions at MC12
- Publicise the Statement as a resource for advocacy and mobilisation
- Strengthen PHM's capacity in relation to trade and health
 - Build PHM awareness and understanding of the issues canvassed in the Statement
 - Strengthen local trade and health networks and build PHM links with such networks
 - Build links with PHM's Trade and Health Circle (write to T&H Coordination, tradeandhealth@phmovement.org)