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Yet Another ‘Final’ TPP Ministerial and Again No Deal; Not Surprising Given Growing Controversy Over TPP Threats Here and in Other Nations

Statement of Lori Wallach, Director, Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch

Today’s fourth “final” TPP ministerial without a deal means the clock has run out on possible U.S. congressional votes in 2015. No deal means the TPP is thrown into the political maelstrom of the U.S. presidential cycle and with opposition building in many countries there are reduced chances that a deal will ever be reached on a pact that U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman declared to be in its “end game” in 2013 but that has become ever more controversial since.

It’s good news for people and the planet that no deal was done at this final do-or-die meeting given the TPP’s threats to jobs, wages, safe food, affordable medicines and more. Only the beleaguered negotiators and most of the 600 official U.S. trade advisors representing corporate interests wanted this deal, which recent polling shows is unpopular in most of the countries involved.

This ministerial was viewed as a do-or-die moment to inject momentum into the TPP process, so this Maui meltdown in part reflects how controversial the TPP is in many of the involved nations and how little latitude governments feel to make concessions to get a deal.

The intense U.S. national political battle over trade authority was just a preview of the massive opposition the TPP would face once members of Congress and the public see the specific TPP terms that threaten their interests. Given the damaging impacts that some TPP proposals could have for many people, it’s not surprising that the same set of issues including investor-state dispute resolution and medicine patents as well as market access issues like sugar, dairy, and rules-of-origin on manufactured goods like autos remain deadlocked given they will determine whether a final pact is politically viable in various TPP countries.

Many of the 28 House Democrats who supported Fast Track authority for Obama explicitly said that their support for the TPP relied on certain goals being met, including strong, enforceable labor and environmental standards, and no rolling back of past patent rule reforms relating to access to medicines – terms meeting the “May 2007” standard that elements of the TPP do not meet.

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Useful Resources

- **The Fast Track timeline for a U.S. congressional vote on the TPP:** As this [memo](#) explains, under the Fast Track bill passed last month, various congressional notice and report filing requirements add up to about four and one half months between notice of a final deal and congressional votes being taken. Thus, unless there is a final TPP to go along with today's press announcement so that formal notice to Congress can be given immediately, it is already too late for a TPP vote in Congress in 2015.
- **Congressional Letters Raising Doubts on the TPP's Prospects:** On July 30, 19 pro-Fast Track Democrats sent a [letter](#) laying out necessary environmental terms for an acceptable deal; on July 29, 18 pro-Fast Track Democrats sent a [letter](#) about lack of enforcement in current and future trade agreements and demanding action against Peru for violations of environmental terms in its bilateral U.S. trade deal. Twelve Democrats who supported Fast Track and 12 GOP members were among the 160 Representatives signing a [letter](#) decrying Malaysia's inclusion in the TPP and the upgrade of Malaysia's Human Trafficking status. Since Fast Track's passage, a series of letters have been sent by U.S. [representatives](#) and [senators](#) insisting that the TPP include enforceable disciplines against currency cheating in its core text.
- **Polling:** As [this memo](#) shows, recent polling reveals broad U.S. public opposition to more of the same trade deals among Independents, Republicans and Democrats. While Americans support trade, they do not support an expansion of status quo trade policies, complicating the push for the TPP. Furthermore, [recent Pew polls](#) in many of the TPP nations show that, outside Vietnam, the deal does not have strong support.