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## **WTO's Legitimacy So Weak that Ability to Agree on *Anything* Is Touted as Success**

Statement of Lori Wallach

Director, Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch on Conclusion of Bali WTO Ministerial

Hype about this outcome 'saving' the WTO reveals just how dire the WTO's crisis of legitimacy has become. The actual deliverables were a rollback of *existing* WTO agricultural rules, a commitment that countries will update their customs procedures and implementation of trade benefits for least developed countries that had been agreed to years ago.

It is perverse to declare that this outcome restores the WTO's credibility when the biggest 'breakthrough' was simply that yet another WTO meeting did not melt down altogether.

Consider the context of this deal: the Doha Round WTO expansion agenda remains deadlocked after more than a decade. The most apt headline to describe today's outcome comes from Monty Python: I'm not dead yet!

Except for formal adoption of new duty free access for least developing countries that had been agreed years ago, this deal includes no new trade market access. Ironically, another WTO Ministerial meltdown has been avoided only because the United States agreed to a waiver for *existing* WTO agricultural rules that developing countries had demanded to help ensure food security for their populations.

The other texts issued from the meeting merely "affirm" past agreements. Notably, agreement could not even be reached to force compliance with a 2005 WTO decision that all countries must eliminate agricultural export subsidies by 2013, which has not occurred.

The fundamental principle of the WTO – that 160 countries should conform their domestic food, financial, health, energy, patent, procurement and other policies to terms favored by the world's largest corporations – faces growing opposition worldwide.

It's not surprising that the core 'Doha Round' proposals that would have expanded the WTO's power have been rejected, given the damage WTO has caused so many people around the world, and that developing countries have instead insisted on rolling back of some of the existing WTO rules.

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