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For Immediate Release:  
Sept. 15, 2011

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## **WTO Rules Against Dolphin-Safe Tuna Labels**

### ***Round Three of the GATT-WTO Tuna-Dolphin Case: GATTzilla Kills Flipper Again***

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The World Trade Organization (WTO) has ruled against the popular U.S. “dolphin-safe” tuna labeling in a case brought by Mexico, according to a panel report released today. The WTO has struggled to regain legitimacy following the highly visible 1999 Seattle protests that derailed plans to expand the organization’s remit – plans that have been sidelined ever since. Today’s ruling will intensify public opposition to the WTO, said Public Citizen. This is the third time the WTO and its predecessor General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade have ruled against America’s dolphin protection policies.

“It makes very real the threats these overreaching ‘trade’ pacts pose. The first round of this case in 1991 became known to environmental activists as ‘GATTzilla Kills Flipper’ and ignited U.S. public opposition to what would become the WTO,” said Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch. “Until that first ruling, and then a second one several years later, all we could do was point out worrisome negotiating text that we thought could undermine vital domestic environmental and other public interest policies – and then, suddenly, we had the proverbial smoking dolphin.

“In this case, a WTO tribunal is telling American consumers that having the product labels that we rely on to make sure that our shopping and dining choices do not result in dolphins being killed is a WTO violation. These are labels that apply to domestic and foreign tuna alike, that we pushed our Congress to pass,” said Wallach. “Fury about a foreign tribunal ruling against a popular U.S. consumer labeling law on a common food product, which has been explicitly and repeatedly approved by our courts, is among the few things likely to unite Americans across the political spectrum.”

Added Todd Tucker, research director for Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch, “Dolphin-safe tuna labels are strictly voluntary; Mexico can sell tuna in the U.S. market with or without the label. ‘Voluntary’ is the new ‘mandatory,’ according to this WTO ruling. It tells consumers that even voluntary labels, and the subjective consumer preferences they may cultivate, are ripe for WTO attack.”

This ruling comes on the heels of two other WTO attacks on consumer protection and information policies. Last week, the WTO ruled against U.S. measures to reduce teenage

smoking, while a recently leaked ruling concluded that country-of-origin labeling for beef is a WTO violation. All three of these consumer policies are very popular with Congress and the public. These adverse WTO rulings are likely to make it more difficult for the Obama administration to gain approval for three trade deals with Korea, Colombia and Panama that contain similar anti-consumer provisions, Wallach said.

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