

International Civil Society Sends Letter to Governments Opposing Proposed “Trade in Services Agreement (TISA)”

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(OWINFS),

Our World Is Not for Sale

Today, as governments meet in Geneva to negotiate a proposed Trade in Services Agreement (TISA), 341 organizations representing hundreds of thousands of people from nearly every developing and developed country, called on governments to abandon the talks. Among the endorsers were 42 major international and regional networks such as Public Services International (PSI), UNI Global Union, the European Federation of Public Services Unions (EPSU), the IndustriALL Global Union, the International Union of Food and Allied Workers (IUF), and the ATTAC European network. The letter was organized by the OWINFS network.

The letter states, “The TISA negotiations largely follow the corporate agenda of using “trade” agreements to bind countries to an agenda of extreme liberalization and deregulation in order to ensure greater corporate profits at the expense of workers, farmers, consumers and the environment. The proposed agreement is the direct result of systematic advocacy by transnational corporations in banking, energy, insurance, telecommunications, transportation, water, and other services sectors, working through lobby groups like the US Coalition of Service Industries (USCSI) and the European Services Forum (ESF).

“Notwithstanding several financial, economic, social and environmental crises, the services rules proposed for the TISA replicate and greatly expand upon the same rules that ‘discipline’ government measures and limit policy space for regulation, enshrined in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and free trade agreements (FTAs), which contributed to those crises.

“Strong regulation of and oversight over both public and private services is crucial for democracy, the public interest and development, as well as for the orderly functioning of the services market. We fear that all of these values and goals would be seriously undermined by this proposed TISA,” stated signatories.

PSI General Secretary Rosa Pavanelli says, “We call on our affiliates to urge their national governments to withdraw from talks on this proposed TISA and to mobilize workers and communities against this deal which is an assault on the public interest. We believe this deal is about transferring public services into the hands of private and foreign corporations motivated only by profit. This will undermine people’s rights and affordable access to vital public services such as healthcare, water and sanitation, energy, education, social services and pensions, and exploit common goods and natural resources.”

The letter also called on governments that are not participating in the TISA negotiations “to register your strong opposition to the negotiations and to pledge never to join any potential future TISA.” This is because the TISA is “an attempt to advance developed countries’ corporate wish lists for services while abandoning commitments made in the WTO’s Doha Development Agenda

to address developing country concerns, such as fixing existing asymmetries and unfair rules on agriculture.” Major international signatories with the majority of members in non-participating countries include the ACP Civil Society Forum, LDC Watch, the Africa Trade Network, the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), Plataforma Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, Democracia y Desarrollo (PIDHDD), and the Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG).

OWINFS is a global network of NGOs and social movements working for a sustainable, socially just, and democratic multilateral trading system. www.ourworldisnotforsale.org