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PROGRESS OF NEGOTIATIONS

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Corporate Accountability

Corporate accountability has become one of the crunch issues of this Summit. The EU has moved on this issue, we suspect under pressure from the public and NGOs. The G77, which originally proposed an international framework on this issue, seems to have weakened its stance. But FoEI is not giving up on them – as many G77 countries continue to see this as a key issue for the summit. Environment, human rights, development NGOs and labor organizations are unanimous in condemning the failure of the voluntary approach – i.e. letting corporations regulate themselves on social and environmental issues.

Today FoEI has published a remarkable story about an outrageous deal between BP and other oil companies and the Turkish Government. A major new 1760km pipeline is planned to run from Baku on the Caspian Sea to Ceyhan on the Turkish Mediterranean coast. The deal depends on what BP's John Browne shamelessly calls "free public money" and exempts the corridor of the pipeline from most Turkish environmental, social and human rights law. Those who may have fallen for BP's "Beyond Petroleum" greenwash clearly need to think again. The case for a binding convention on corporate responsibility has never been stronger. Full details of the deal are available from FoEI and can be found online at www.foe.co.uk/resource/evidence/turkey-btc-agreement.pdf.

Trade (1)

On multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), dangerous text has been included (in paragraph 20) that would privilege WTO rules over MEAs. The EU has also tried to insist that talks on MEAs should take place through the WTO Doha process. 200 NGOs have called for the reverse and for the Johannesburg summit to clarify that environmental agreements can never be overruled by trade rules. On sustainability impact assessments (SIAs) and the integration of environmental and sustainable development principles into trade agreements, the G77 has blocked further progress. On sustainability and market access, difficult negotiations continue –

the current text would bar all trade related subsidies, even including the promotion of research into local economic development, sustainability and environmental protection.

Yesterday night, the EU impeded progress in negotiations by proposing a ministerial meeting on a list of issues including the Rio principles, water and sanitation, energy, a 10 year program for sustainable development and production, trade and finance. Other negotiators insisted on continuing talks on the precautionary approach.

Trade (2) WTO

The Summit is rapidly turning into an annex of the Doha WTO talks. There are about 200 references to the WTO in the current text. Language on globalization for example has been lifted straight from the Doha text.

FoEI has found that 18 countries present in Johannesburg are not even WTO members – Afghanistan, Algeria, Korea, Comoros, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Kiribati, Liberia, Libya, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Monaco, Nauru, Palau, Moldova, San Marino, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Turkmenistan. Yesterday, the Tobago delegate said that his country was not a WTO member and might like to talk about some of the key issues here and not in Doha, only to find that they in fact joined seven years ago. FoEI wonders whether the Earth Summit is the right place for further Governments effectively to sign up to the WTO.

Finance

There are still no commitments to finally achieve the 0.7% overseas aid target already promised 30 years ago, and no substantive text on environmental and social standards for Export Credit Agencies.

Climate

Delegates await the US's alternative language on climate change, which will try to take references to the Kyoto Protocol out of the final text. Publication was expected yesterday but it has yet to appear. Perhaps the US has problems in trying to draft words, which appear to be concerned about the issue while removing all references to practical action. The US Administration was slammed for climate inaction at a Summit press conference yesterday by Democratic Congressmen Miller, Kucinich, and Blumenauer. The current text proposed by Norway calls on all countries to ratify Kyoto. Russia's ratification (promised by President Putin for months) is essential if the Protocol is to enter into force. The EU is backing the Norway text, but there is rumored to be some internal argument on this. Japan has proposed new Kyoto language, which we do not have yet.

Renewable Energy

Brazil proposed that 10% of global energy supply should come from new renewables (which excludes large hydro and traditional biomass) by 2010. They are backed by Norway, Philippines, Mexico, Morocco and others. The EU is under pressure to revise its much weaker target. The

issue will go to the ministers. Saudi Arabia has tried to get other Arab states to dump on this plan, and denounced Morocco for selling out Arab interests by being green on this question. Morocco has domestic targets of 10% by 2011 and 20% by 2020. Last night the facilitator proposed a new energy package including a timetable to phase out subsidies and a role for public/private partnerships in a “social responsibility framework” (whatever that is) and a target to be negotiated today. The G77 is also making a proposal today, reportedly based around voluntary regional targets.

Common Responsibilities?

At Rio 10 years ago, the world’s Governments signed up to the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities”. This means that every state has a common duty to look after the planet, but future action will vary depending on their current economic power and impact on the planet. At the Bali prepcom meeting for this year’s Summit, the US insisted that these words be placed in brackets, where they so far remain. To FoEI all Rio Principles are not negotiable. If they get watered down at Johannesburg the Summit will be remembered as Rio Minus 10.

Weak Language and Other Issues

Negotiations on many key parts of the text seem to be heading away from any green result. Language on sustainable consumption and the Rio principles, for example, is being weakened. Weasel words such as “moving towards” and “if possible” are qualifying targets, for example on fishing. On chemicals, the text offers the feeble pledge to move towards minimizing the harmful use of chemicals by 2020! Eco-labeling is in trouble, with US and G77 combining against the EU on the issue, and backing a “voluntary approach”. Such a voluntary approach would undermine the GMO labeling directive of the EU.

Do not believe the UN and delegation spin doctors claiming that progress in the talks is good because 95% of the text has been agreed. This is just a word counting trick, that FoEI has heard before at failed negotiations from the Seattle WTO talks to the Hague climate talks. Rather important words such as those on globalization remain entirely unagreed. This is not “rapid progress” in any normal sense of these words.

Some media are reporting that the total cost of the Summit, estimated at around \$50 million, is way too high. Remember that the annual cost of the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy is \$60 billion.