



**ASIA PACIFIC FORUM ON WOMEN, LAW AND DEVELOPMENT
(APWLD)**

**APWLD statement for the WTO 5th Ministerial Meeting in Cancun, Mexico
September 10-14, 2003**

**ASIA PACIFIC WOMEN WON'T BE TRADE-OFFS FOR US-EU PROFITS!
PERSIST WITH THE STRUGGLE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY!**

As the trade ministers from 146 countries of WTO meet in Cancun to continue the negotiations on the Agreement on Agriculture, among others, Asia Pacific women join the global call for food sovereignty.

The call for food sovereignty is a call for the recognition of the right of peoples, communities and countries to define for themselves ecologically, socially, economically, and culturally appropriate food production. It is a call for community control over productive resources as opposed to corporate control. Food sovereignty entails a breaking down of patriarchal structures in agriculture, and customary practices related to food production, which further the burdens of women as peasants, agricultural workers, and as family food providers.

The Agreement on Agriculture (AOA) does not in any way come close to contributing to the attainment of food sovereignty. What it ensures are profits, market, and resources for US, EU and the transnational companies. The negotiations where developing countries are supposed to push for better agreements, were transformed to bullying and harrying by US and EU. What is on the table now are measures that would push developing countries for more tariff reductions and withdrawal of protection of agricultural products, while allowing developed countries to maintain their subsidies to their own agriculture. These are measures which further widen the inequalities of world trade in agriculture.

What the AOA further ensures is the impoverishment of communities, and the increase of women's burden in both production and reproduction work. Over the years, women from the region have been telling their stories – how their work hours have grown longer, under harsher conditions, with lesser pay; while on the other hand, their social reproduction work, as food providers and nurturers, have not been reduced. In fact,

with the increasing poverty of the families, the reproductive work of women has increased and intensified.

The AOA clearly is an effective instrument to enrich and entrench the control of US, EU and transnational agribusiness companies, with the developing countries trading-off their own resources, their sovereignty and the lives of the women and men in the agricultural sector.

It has been proven, unequivocally, by the testimonies of people world over, by the burgeoning global mass movements against WTO, that WTO has never been, and will never be, an institution that we can expect, or even negotiate for, equitable and fair multilateral trading system.

Thus, on the occasion of the WTO 5th ministerial meeting, the Asia Pacific women strongly and urgently call for our governments to get out of WTO. Heed the peoples' voice. Stop being used as pawns by US, EU and TNCs. Stop using the lives of rural women and men as trade-offs, for the protection of these commercial interests.

We demand that our governments implement genuine land reform program within the framework of equal rights of access and control to rural women and men; implement policies and mechanisms that would address food shortage and promote domestic agricultural production; and dismantle trade agricultural policies that have disastrous impacts on domestic production.

Asia Pacific women link up arms with the different movements and organisations which persist with the struggle for food sovereignty! We reaffirm our call to dismantle the patriarchal structures in agriculture and customary practices related to food production.

We unite with the global movement rising against the aggressive fight for control of US, EU and the TNCs of our seeds, our lands, our waters, our lives.

Asia Pacific Forum for Women, Law and Development

(APWLD)

Sept. 8, 2003

Santitham YMCA Building, 3rd Flr. Rms. 305-308, 11 soi Mengrairasm, Sermasuk Road, Chiang Mai 50300 Thailand
Tel. nos: 66-53-404613 / 66-53-404614
fax: 66-53-404615
apwld@apwld.org
www.apwld.org