Joint Press Release, 28 November 2012:

New Global Challenges Need New Global Leadership

Civil society networks identify gaps in the job description of the new WTO Director-General

Brussels 28 January 2013 - On the eve of the job interviews that will be held at the World Trade Organization (WTO) with the candidates to replace the current Director-General, Pascal Lamy, civil society networks point out gaps in the job description. They call on WTO members to appoint a leader with a recognised track-record in making trade serve the wider interests of society.

The term of office of the current Director-General of the World Trade Organization, Pascal Lamy, ends on 31 August 2013. In line with WTO procedures, the candidates have been invited to meet with WTO Members at a formal General Council meeting in Geneva tomorrow, 29 January, where they will be asked to present themselves and their vision for the WTO, followed by a question-and-answer session. The meeting will be followed by discussions amongst WTO Members, held behind closed doors. The selection process is expected to end with the announcement of the new Director-General by the General Council no later than 31 May 2013.

The WTO recruitment notice provides only a succinct description of the expected qualifications of candidates, which falls short of a full job description:

“Qualifications of candidates: In broad terms, candidates should have extensive experience in international relations, encompassing economic, trade and/or political experience; a firm commitment to the work and objectives of the WTO; proven leadership and managerial ability; and demonstrated communications skills.”

In this context, civil society networks point out that the description of the required qualifications, which dates back from 2003, leaves too much room for the choice of the candidate to be based on the agendas of the most powerful WTO Members, rather than on the abilities and leadership potential of the candidates. Civil society networks call for a high-caliber leader that can move beyond market fundamentalism and lead a process to change the rules of the game.

“New global challenges need a new global leadership”, stated Sergi Corbalán, Executive Director of the Fair Trade Advocacy Office, on behalf of the signatory civil society networks.

The assumption that liberalisation of international trade inevitably contributes to development, which has been the dominant WTO paradigm so far, has proved to be flawed, in particular in those cases where multilateral and bilateral trade commitments have undermined the policy space of democratically-elected governments to put in place policies to achieve their own societal goals.

“For trade to work for development, it is essential that the new Director-General has a successful track-record in making trade serve wider societal objectives, such as respect for the environment, social protection and human rights”, Corbalán concluded.
This press release is co-signed by the following civil society networks:

World Fair Trade Organization-Europe  http://www.wfto-europe.org/
European Fair Trade Association    http://www.eftafairtrade.org/
Fairtrade International            http://www.fairtrade.net/
Alternative Trade Mandate           http://www.alternativetrademandate.org/
Trade Justice Movement              http://www.tjm.org.uk/
Food and Water Europe              http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/europe/
Artisans du Monde                   http://www.artisansdumonde.org/
                                    http://www.cncd.be/
CTM Altromercato                    http://www.altromercato.it/it
Oxfam Wereldwinkels                http://www.oxfamwereldwinkels.be/homepage/
Organisation Solidarité Internationale http://www.solidarite.asso.fr/
Polish Fair Trade Association       http://www.sprawiedliwyhandel.pl
Coordinadora Estatal de Comercio Justo http://comerciojusto.org/
Plate-Forme pour le Commerce Equitable http://www.commerceequitable.org/
Traidcraft                          http://www.traidcraft.co.uk/