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Civil Society Forum Declaration to UNCTAD XII

“Poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere”

(Declaration of Philadelphia, International Labour Organization, 1944)

Civil Society Forum

1. The Civil Society Forum, meeting on the occasion of UNCTAD XII (20–25 April 2008), took place in Accra, Ghana, from 17 to 19 April 2008. It brought together social movements, pro-development groups, women’s groups, trade unions, peasants and agricultural organizations, environmental organizations, faith-based organizations and fair trade organizations (referred to as *We* thereafter), which expressed a variety of perspectives on trade, investment and competition policies and their impacts on development. Forum participants were united in the defence of a number of principles, positions and actions they wished to present to the member States of the United Nations Trade and Development Conference at its twelfth session.

I. Global context

2. The era of globalization is proving to be a time of persistent and growing inequalities. Current neoliberal policies are far from neutral. World trade growth has been accompanied by the dislocation of the poorest societies, including least developing countries (LDCs), and the continued suffering of the most vulnerable groups, particularly hundreds of millions of women.

3. UNCTAD XII is taking place at a critical juncture for the global economy and multilateral system. The looming recession, volatile food and commodity prices and the credit crunch that are part of the backdrop to UNCTAD XII are all manifestations of a dysfunctional global system.

4. The opposite poles of wealth and poverty reinforce each other with every new manifestation of the flaws of the system. The most notable problems today are, first, the massive losses (now estimated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) at almost US\$1 trillion) arising from the global financial crisis, and, second, the world crisis of rising food prices and food shortages.

5. We want Governments and UNCTAD XII to take action now on these two fronts. Financial institutions and speculation must be regulated, along with the global financial system that promotes the unregulated flow of capital, particularly speculative funds and activities. The UNCTAD secretariat has done great work on finance. If the international community had followed its advice, there might not have been such a crisis today. UNCTAD XII must mandate the Organization to expand its work on finance, including how developing countries would be affected by the fallout of the financial crisis, what they can do about it, and how to overhaul the global financial architecture. The objective should be to ensure that finance serves development, not the greed of speculators. The goals of development include decent work, full employment, adequate income, environmental sustainability and gender equality.

6. The food crisis is mainly caused by a mismatch of supply and demand. Another reason is the shift from producing food to biofuels, a trend which should be reviewed and reversed. But another reason is that developing countries were wrongly pressured by the loan conditionalities of the World Bank and IMF to cut Government subsidies, support to small farmers, and food import duties. At the same time, high agricultural subsidies continue in rich countries. Local farmers, who have been submerged by cheap, subsidized exports, have livelihood problems.

7. The food crisis makes policy change necessary. Developing countries must be allowed to defend their food security and small farmers, so as to quickly expand food production through sustainable agriculture and raise tariffs in order to prevent import surges. Developed countries must quickly phase out their trade-distorting subsidies, including those within the so-called Green Box subsidies. Land set aside for biofuel production should be reclaimed for farming. There must be changes to policies at the World Bank, the IMF and the World Trade Organization (WTO) and to free trade agreements (FTAs), including economic partnership agreements (EPAs). UNCTAD can play a central role in this reform, helping to find the right solutions to the food crisis.

8. A major achievement of UNCTAD XI was to recognize the importance of policy space for developing countries. However, policy space for government intervention and regulation has shrunk further since then. In particular, this has been caused by loan conditionalities and existing WTO rules, as well as substantial increases in bilateral and regional free trade agreements. These agreements lock developing countries into inappropriate liberalization of imported goods and services and unsuitable intellectual property rights (IPR) policies. The FTAs and EPAs also introduce new rules on liberalizing investment and government procurement that go beyond WTO commitments, eroding Governments' ability to regulate for development and for the public welfare.

9. This erosion of policy space remains the main issue, especially since this loss of policy space also poses a threat to the ability of developing countries to deal with the finance and food crises.

10. Consequently, our principal demand is that UNCTAD XII deal even more forcefully with the issue of policy space. UNCTAD – both the Secretariat and the inter-governmental machinery – must be given an expanded mandate to empower developing countries with the use of policy tools for development.

11. As a result of orthodox policy prescriptions, the policy space to exercise governmental intervention and regulation by developing countries has diminished. While developed countries ensure they retain sufficient possibilities for national policy intervention, the needed range of policy options is not available to developing countries. Over the last decades, as part of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) as well as WTO and bilateral North–South trade negotiations,

developing countries have given up substantial policy space, resulting in an inability to respond adequately to economic instabilities and social emergencies and impeding long-term development.

12. The increasing number and expanding scope of bilateral and regional North–South agreements that go beyond WTO commitments and ruthlessly promote the North’s corporate agenda constitute a grave danger for democracy, development and social solidarity at local, national and international levels, as most of these North–South FTAs, including EPAs, drastically erode the policy space required for economic and social development. The international rules and conditionalities imposed on developing country governments not only limit their ability to choose and implement appropriate development policies but also hinder genuine dialogue with citizens and civil society, since policymakers believe they are constrained to follow the policies laid down through institutions such as the World Bank, IMF and regional banks and through trade agreements.

13. Developing countries face continuous pressures to liberalize their imports, even though local industries and agricultural sectors in many countries have been hamstrung by cheap imports. In many poor countries, the dumping of subsidized farm exports from the North onto world markets continues to destroy rural livelihoods. Many LDCs, especially in Africa, have seen their local industries close or lose their share of the local market due to import liberalization imposed by the World Bank, IMF and regional development banks. The EPAs negotiated with the European Union will cause a new wave of economic dislocation in the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries.

14. At WTO, the Doha negotiations have so far produced very imbalanced draft proposals. Developed countries can continue their high agricultural subsidies through shifting of the boxes or categories of subsidies because many of the so-called non-trade-distorting Green Box subsidies have been found in reality to be trade distorting (and to adversely affect quality production and exports of developing countries), but proposals to improve disciplines to limit these subsidies are weak and grossly inadequate. Yet while the North maintains its subsidies, developing countries are pressured to cut their agricultural tariffs further by an average 36 per cent (which is more than the 24 per cent in the Uruguay Round), making them even more vulnerable to import surges and consequent rural dislocation.

15. In the negotiations on industrial goods, the “Swiss formula”, never before used, will slash tariffs for industrial goods in developing countries, damaging or even destroying many local industries. LDCs do not have to reduce their tariffs through the Doha Round, but most of them may also be affected by deep tariff cuts through other mechanisms, including bilateral agreements like the EPAs, and further loan conditionalities. Meanwhile, developed countries not only maintain their agricultural subsidies but also plan to protect their important agricultural products from tariff cuts through various mechanisms, and are only prepared to cut their industrial tariffs by lower rates than developing countries under the “Swiss formula”. Non-tariff barriers are increasingly used to block market access for products from developing countries. The Doha deal is turning out to work against the developing countries, although it was intended to be a Development Round.

16. Furthermore, developed countries are pushing for liberalization of services through regional and multilateral trade agreements. Strategic sectors such as finance and telecommunications may well end up dominated by foreign firms. In addition, the role of the State in providing public services may be further threatened.

17. Access to social services is also threatened by intellectual property regimes that limit access to medicines and information. In particular, women’s access to

health care, information and education is affected, further denying their empowerment and undermining their efforts to participate in political and public activities and ensure a sustainable livelihood.

18. Despite the dangers of climate change, unsustainable levels and patterns of production and consumption continue to prevail in the industrialized countries, accelerating the endangerment of and stress to global natural resources. The North continues to incur an ecological debt to the South, but developing countries still come under pressure to allow exploitation of natural resources by multinational enterprises (MNEs).

19. The right to regulate and inclusiveness in decision-making processes, both nationally and internationally, are in danger. Social dialogue is weakened by structural adjustment policies. Social and economic rights, and labour and trade union rights, including freedom of association and non-discrimination, are weakened, not guaranteed by the globalization of production methods.

20. Although there is a prevalent idea that greater foreign direct investment (FDI) is the main development option for developing countries; in reality, FDI results in more costs and losses in many cases. In many countries, it exacerbates the outflow of resources, including investment resources, from these countries and the acute imbalance that arises in the global economy. Moreover, Africa, the poorest continent in the world, is a net exporter of capital, even while the burden of its external (and internal) debt continues to crush development possibilities and aspirations year after year. Domestic resource mobilization is seriously hampered by imbalanced resource flows, especially capital flight.

21. The benefits of globalization remain in the hands of a few. Development promises made by the economic export-led model and by import liberalization remain unmet in most countries. Even though prices have increased recently, the benefits of commodity production have been limited for commodity producers, as a result of the scant domestic value added to commodities and the concentration of control of much of the value chain in the hands of MNEs and others.

22. Increasing economic integration of many developing countries in the world economy has not addressed the development concerns of their populations. The need for decent and productive employment has not been met by current models of development, as unemployment and underemployment remain unacceptably high.

23. Another example is the irony of “jobless growth”, accentuated by the dislocation and expulsion of tens of millions from production activities and alternative non-market socio-economic micro-systems that have historically maintained some access to life resources for some of the most vulnerable in developing countries. What has been described as the “commodification of the commons”, together with the spread of market-driven commodity chains and attendant property forms over natural resources, is imposing unprecedented labour intensity and precarious “flexibilization” and “casualization” on a minority lucky to hold on to steady employment in the formal sector and forced to share resources, as well as compete, with a vast sea of dispossessed human capacity.

24. We reaffirm that employment is the key to poverty eradication, but this implies the inclusion of full and productive employment and decent work in agriculture, services and industrialization as the main goal in policymaking and requires trade policies and financial policies that are consistent with this objective. UNCTAD should incorporate into its activities the commitment to decent work which was adopted by all United Nations member States at the 2005 World Summit of the United Nations General Assembly and reaffirmed in the 2006 Ministerial Declaration of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

25. As the dominant models have failed to ensure social welfare, there is a need to explore alternative diverse and participatory economic systems that are adapted to local and national realities, while also prioritizing and protecting equity, democracy and diversity, human rights, labour rights, ecology, food security and sustainable production and consumption.

II. Specific issues by sub-theme

A. Sub-theme 1: Enhancing coherence at all levels for sustainable economic development and poverty reduction in global policymaking, including the contribution of regional approaches

26. A major challenge in the discussion on coherence is the different interpretations of coherence. For States in developed countries, the main view of coherence is the harmonization of policies that guarantee more markets and profits for their companies. For civil society, coherence means that policies should aim to promote poverty eradication, social equity, gender equity and social development; increase employment; and ensure the livelihoods of farmers and the process of industrialization through sustainable development.

27. The Bretton Woods institutions and the most powerful member States within WTO currently consider coherence to be the harmonization of national policies, in order to ensure that these do not conflict with the prevailing international neoliberal economic order. On this assumption, structural adjustment programmes, poverty reduction strategy papers, bilateral and multilateral trade and investment rules, underpinned by the aid regime, all demand that developing countries, LDCs and countries in transition tailor their economic policies to fit a corporate-driven model.

28. For the ordinary citizens of the world and for civil society organizations, however, coherence means, as stated in the Sao Paulo Consensus, that international economic policies must address the needs of all people. To achieve such an objective, autonomous, sovereign, and participatory development priorities must be the entry point and chief determinant of negotiations and obligations involving these countries in institutions of economic governance. Furthermore, the Governments of developing countries and LDCs and democratically elected politicians must be much more strongly represented in the decision-making processes of these institutions.

29. The lack of representation of developing countries in global governance results in top-down development approaches and policies, while maintaining a disconnect between decision-making centres and recipient countries and their peoples.

30. “Coherence” around the wrong principles and measures, which now prevails, has led to the wrong outcomes. Many North–South regional and bilateral trade agreements are used to promote the wrong kind of coherence. They make developing countries enter into undertakings that go beyond WTO commitments and include issues such as investment and government procurement that were rejected at WTO. They significantly erode whatever policy space exists in developing countries, in addition to undermining the prospects for South–South cooperation and regional integration.

31. An additional problem is the use of the so-called “development aspect” of trade agreements such as EPAs, which is used as “bait” by developed country parties to draw developing countries into the main aspects of FTAs or EPAs that are detrimental to development.

32. UNCTAD should take note of the above dangers and wrong manifestations of “coherence”, striving towards policy coherence that is appropriate, in which all policy advice, measures and agreements are focused and geared to the development of developing countries.

33. UNCTAD XII must be based on a radically different form of “coherence”: a reorientation and integration of policies that ensure that the international economic order is adjusted to meet the development needs of the groups most affected by corporate-driven globalization.

B. Sub-theme 2: Key trade and development issues and the new realities in the geography of the world economy

34. The debate on the link between trade and development is ongoing. The orthodox position is that trade and the dominant trade policy are positive for development. However, a majority of developing countries have suffered from inappropriate import liberalization while gaining little from exports. Their local industries and agriculture have been stifled by cheap imports, with loss of farm livelihoods and industrial jobs.

35. The one-size-fits-all approach to economic and trade policymaking does not work and results in wrong policies and great cost to many developing countries and their people. Contrary to the prevailing view of the international financial institutions, the road to sustainable development is not the same for everyone.

36. North–South FTAs including EPAs, mainly promote the North’s corporate agenda and pose a grave threat to developing countries. UNCTAD’s *Trade and Development Report 2007* was valuable for highlighting the cost and benefits of North–South FTAs, and the Organization must continue to focus on this.

37. We stress the need for immediate rectification of the wrong policies of the World Bank and IMF and recently of the EPAs and FTAs. As for the EPAs, the European Union should stop pressuring the ACP countries to conclude them. An alternative to EPAs should be found, with the non-reciprocal principle at the centre of the trade aspect, which also does not contain the issues of services, intellectual property rights (IPRs), investment and government procurement.

38. African civil society, backed by European civil society, has been campaigning against the EPAs and their framework while advocating alternative approaches that retain preferences for ACP countries without an obligation for them to liberalize their goods imports on a reciprocal basis. In addition, it wishes to exclude other issues such as services, IPRs, investment, competition and government procurement. It is largely felt that the EPAs were signed not as an instrument for delivering development in ACP countries but out of fear that if access to the EU market was not preserved, some of their trade would be disrupted. There should be a renegotiation of those EPAs that have been already negotiated and a review in other countries that have not yet signed the EPAs, allowing civil society to assess the full implications so that informed decisions (including opting for alternatives to the EPAs) can be made without pressure.

39. At WTO, the latest proposals on the Doha negotiations, if adopted, would have a deeply imbalanced outcome, with developed countries continuing to maintain high agricultural subsidies while reducing their industrial tariffs at rates lower than developing countries undertaking the “Swiss formula” cuts. Developing countries would have to make deeper tariff cuts in industrial and agricultural goods. Many of the poorer countries, which may not undertake tariff cuts through the Doha negotiations, would have to do so under the EPAs.

40. Global trade rules must recognize the vital role for Governments in regulation and thus preserve or expand policy space so that each country can plan and manage its own economic development as well as mitigate the risks associated with the volatilities arising from integration of markets.

41. The use of conditionalities in loans and aid has often resulted in inappropriate trade and investment policies in many developing countries.

42. Commodity-dependent developing countries are confronted with complex problems ranging from price volatility to corporate concentration. UNCTAD XII should provide practical solutions such as price-stabilizing mechanisms and regulation of corporate activities. An expanded commodity programme for UNCTAD is needed.

43. Developing countries also face increasing non-tariff barriers (NTBs) to their products in developed countries. A major problem is the use of unilateral measures. While safety and technical regulations are needed, they are also prone to be used for protectionist purposes. Moreover, most developing countries lack the capacity to keep up with increasing standards in developed country markets. Developed countries should not make use of unilateral, protectionist measures. Proper international standards should be established and developing countries must be assisted in negotiating and implementing those standards. UNCTAD should work on NTBs and assist developing countries in that regard.

44. South–South cooperation offers the potential for partnerships among developing countries that can be mutually beneficial. A few countries have experienced sustained high rates of growth, and this has assisted other countries through higher demand for their commodity exports. However, it is not certain that this process will be sustained, especially if there is a global recession. Consequently, concrete measures must be taken to strengthen and institutionalize South–South cooperation. There is a need to strengthen the General System of Trade Preferences (GSTP) mechanism in order to achieve tangible concrete results. However, steps must be taken to ensure that within South–South agreements, weaker partners are accorded special and differential treatment, including sufficient incentives and preferences, and are not asked to undertake liberalization or implement policies that make them vulnerable to negative effects. UNCTAD should also play a role in promoting and assessing South–South cooperation and integration processes.

C. Sub-theme 3: Enhancing the enabling environment at all levels to strengthen productive capacity, trade and investment: mobilizing resources and harnessing knowledge for development

45. Investment and investment flows do not behave in the manner claimed by those who try to justify globalization of finance, trade and production. The share of resources going into new productive investments has declined relative to the share going to financial and speculative ventures. Africa remains a net exporter of capital due to capital flight, even as it is dependent on foreign investment and aid flows.

46. In cases where developing countries have succeeded in attracting and using investment, the factors for their success include appropriate regulation, strategic direction and a direct if selective role for the State in the economy. In poorer countries, there is a lack of domestic private investment.

47. There are benefits and costs to foreign investment in developing countries. While benefits are often exaggerated, costs are often not overlooked or left out of policy decisions. Developing countries should take a holistic view and design policy on the basis of assessments of costs and benefits, with the help of UNCTAD. In that

context, what is also important are the terms of the contract between the State and the foreign investors. UNCTAD should help developing countries to improve those terms so as to increase their benefits. Also, the terms for foreign investment must be such that they do not affect the sovereignty of developing countries by limiting their policy space. Any international framework on investment should promote the rights and interests of host developing countries and ensure their policy space to regulate investments for the national and public interest. UNCTAD should also research successful experiences of developing countries that have negotiated good terms in foreign investment contracts and disseminate those experiences.

48. Of major significance for successful development is the revival of the developmental State or a democratic State that develops and sustains the capacities of decision-makers and institutions to plan and navigate the necessary strategic course, based on an autonomous and endogenous agenda whose content has been determined by, and is an expression of, democratic political consensus for integrated and balanced development.

49. UNCTAD should counterbalance many of the instruments of the World Bank, OECD and donor agencies that lead to reforms of national investment and business laws which are designed to benefit foreign investors but which erode or remove people's rights and restrict the policy space of Governments and parliamentarians.

50. Investment agreements often put the burden of costs on Governments and their populations while leaving multinational enterprises (MNEs) free of any responsibility. In some cases, those agreements include dispute settlement systems that allow a MNE to sue its host government for compensation. The new FTAs, including EPAs, incorporate new investment liberalization with many new restrictions preventing Governments from regulating activities. Countries should review their investment policies that place investors' rights above the rights of citizens. Withdrawing from bilateral investment treaties in favour of more balanced ones, as some developing countries have begun to do, is an option.

D. Sub-theme 4: Strengthening UNCTAD: enhancing its development role, impact and institutional effectiveness

51. We believe UNCTAD has a unique role, especially in these uncertain times. Its function as a support to developing countries in development issues and processes must be expanded.

52. UNCTAD was mandated by UNCTAD XI to establish a task force on commodities. This has yet to be operationalized, and the Organization should be enabled to do so as soon as possible.

53. UNCTAD's work on commodities should be expanded with a view to helping developing countries boost food production; obtain better value for their commodities; and add value to their raw materials through processing and manufacturing. UNCTAD's expanded efforts with regard to commodities should include finding solutions at the international and national levels and combining both old and innovative approaches in order to ensure that the current boom in commodity prices leads to sustainable development and diversification of developing countries. Activities can focus on helping developing countries benefit from the opportunities arising from rising commodity prices as well as avoiding and containing the negative consequences of falling commodity prices when they do fall.

54. UNCTAD should also continue its efforts to analyse the development implications of North-South FTAs, following up on the *Trade and Development Report 2007* which highlighted the imbalances in such agreements. Its work in this

area and on bilateral investment agreements should be guided by the development perspective.

55. UNCTAD should rethink its investment policy advice. It should help stop the “race to the bottom” regarding incentives for investments, including tax holidays. It should provide analysis on costs and benefits of foreign investment, and advice on policies to maximize benefits while minimizing costs. It should also analyse in greater depth the development implications of bilateral investment treaties, as well as investment chapters and proposals in FTAs.

56. Independent research and alternative policy formulation by the UNCTAD secretariat are necessary. UNCTAD must continue to develop and provide analysis and support in this respect, and should be given the means to provide analysis and policy advice to developing countries.

57. The UNCTAD secretariat must be allowed to continue its research in an independent manner so that it can produce objective research aimed at supporting the development goals of developing countries, thereby adding to the diversity of views among the international agencies.

58. UNCTAD’s research work makes an important contribution to knowledge about trade and development issues and has contributed historically to the definition of new trends. It is important that UNCTAD maintain its research independence. We urge member States to provide UNCTAD with the means to continue its independent research and call on the management of UNCTAD to strive to improve the dissemination of the Organization’s research work and publications.

59. UNCTAD needs to expand its research to include analysis of trade liberalization proposals and their impact on the quantity and quality of employment.

60. With a rising world population, changing climate conditions and new demands for agriculture products, agriculture’s role is swiftly evolving, posing a major challenge for sustainable development in coming years. UNCTAD will need to help developing countries identify the best policies for sustainable agriculture to deal with these new challenges.

61. UNCTAD should study the policy options for developing countries for industrialization, bearing in mind the changing world conditions and learning from the experiences of developing and developed countries.

62. The Commissions of UNCTAD perform an important function and should continue on a more effective basis. In addition, a new Commission on Globalization and Development Strategies should be established by UNCTAD XII.

63. UNCTAD should be given an expanded mandate on policy space, the concept and its application.

64. UNCTAD should be asked to expand its work on topical issues that are important to the world, including the food crisis, finance and development, climate change, migration, trade agreements, intellectual property and South–South cooperation. It must provide a development perspective and show the way forward on these issues.

65. On climate change, UNCTAD can concentrate on the inter-relationship between climate change and trade and development, with a view to strengthening developing countries’ ability to withstand the negative impact and effects of climate change on development, and also to ensure that proposals on climate change that relate to trade do not adversely affect developing countries in an imbalanced way and are in line with the “common but differentiated responsibility” principle.

66. Intellectual property rights (IPRs), and especially their implications for development, have emerged as a major issue of interest and concern to the public worldwide. Civil society organizations and developing country governments are calling for greater flexibilities for developing countries in the implementation of international obligations such as in the agreement on trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights or agreements under the World Intellectual Property Organization. UNCTAD has an important role in highlighting the development dimension in the IPR debate and in assisting developing countries to formulate their IPR measures and legislation in a manner that is development oriented. UNCTAD has been addressing IPR, access to technology and development concerns for many years, and its efforts in this area which are guided by this development perspective should be strengthened.

67. An invigorated UNCTAD is necessary and should not interpret its mandate restrictively. UNCTAD's technical assistance should be driven by the needs of recipients, including civil society, not those of donors. It should for instance not be limited to implementing existing international frameworks, such as WTO rules, but should also creatively explore development-oriented alternatives in a fast-changing world.

68. The intergovernmental consensus-building role of UNCTAD is important and should be given more emphasis and priority. This can complement the negotiations or discussions taking place in other fora. If taken more seriously, this intergovernmental function can make UNCTAD the venue for a revitalized North–South dialogue on development issues, and on the link between development with trade, finance and other issues.

69. UNCTAD, in collaboration with other United Nations specialized agencies, is examining the impact of the concentration of market power in the hands of a few firms on the international agriculture markets. Similar examples of concentration of power can be found in manufacturing, such as electronics, textiles and clothing, where subcontracting exerts downward pressure on wages and working conditions for those at the bottom end of the supply chain. Reliance on corporate social responsibility to meet these challenges is insufficient: UNCTAD should be given a mandate to explore how best to address market concentration through laws and policies at both the national and international levels.

70. UNCTAD should also play a monitoring role as regards assessments of MNEs' role and impact on development. To that end, it could foster discussion between developing country governments, other United Nations agencies, business, unions and NGOs.

71. UNCTAD should play a stronger role in ensuring the effective implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for LDCs for the decade 2001-2010, including through urging and assisting LDCs and their development partners.

72. The primacy of political sovereignty must be assured. Sovereignty over natural resources, commodities and biodiversity should be guaranteed. Although they are conflicting paradigms, both globalization and development are in essence political and political economy processes, and the actual political balance weighing in one or another direction can often be decisive. UNCTAD's efforts to further the cause of development and its collaboration with those working for development add up to a more favourable political balance.

73. Since UNCTAD X and the Bangkok Plan of Action, the hopes of civil society that UNCTAD and the United Nations would play a greater role in international social, environmental and economic policymaking have been consistently dashed. UNCTAD's role has been weakened rather than strengthened in recent years, a trend

that should be reversed. Although UNCTAD is important, it continues to be deprived of the means to play a pivotal role, calling into question the credibility of the global governance system. In the current context, with the crisis at WTO and in the Bretton Woods institutions, the need for an alternative forum is even more important. However, this will require a joint effort by all members to engage towards designing a sustainable model of globalization.

74. We urge UNCTAD to work with civil society organizations, social movements, gender-based movements and community-based groups on a permanent basis throughout the world. More participation of civil society organizations, in particular NGOs and trade unions in expert meetings and commission meetings, including as panellists, as well as engagement with civil society in developing countries on technical cooperation activities and research is necessary. Research done by civil society organizations should be recognized and used by UNCTAD. Hearings with civil society should engage the whole range of UNCTAD's membership. The Organization indeed has a global role to play. It can contribute to sustainable political and social peace globally.

75. As already stated during UNCTAD XI, we hope that all member States will provide the necessary support and commitment to make UNCTAD strong enough to contribute to the political shaping of appropriate policies in the areas of sustainable development, social inclusion and gender equality all over the world.

Accra, 19 April 2008
