



GEN Circular 8 (2013)

To all PSI affiliates

File Reference: DB/PCH/trade agreements

Contact Name: Danny Bertossa daniel.bertossa@world-psi.org

31 July 2013

Dear Colleagues,

A NEW GLOBAL THREAT TO PUBLIC SERVICES

PSI Work on Trade Agreements

Public Services International's Executive Board (EB-145) in May 2013 endorsed a proposal to increase PSI's work on trade agreements (see attachment).

This work will focus on the most prominent threats to our affiliates, including ensuring that trade agreements are not used to open public services to private commercial activities but are used to contribute to the application of international labour standards to protect workers' rights.

Trade In Services Agreement (TISA)

A worrying emerging concern is the discussions currently taking place around an international services agreement to follow on from the previous General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). Currently, services account for two-thirds of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) but only about 20% of trade world-wide. Acting on behalf of powerful corporations in the services industries, about 37 countries calling themselves "The Really Good Friends of Services" (RGF) launched secret unofficial talks in 2012 towards drafting a new treaty, the Trade in Services Agreement (TISA), that would further liberalize trade and investment in services, including many public services.

The treaty rules would increase foreign corporate control over domestic services and would restrict governments' ability to regulate services. This would essentially change the regulation of many public, privatized or commercial services from serving the public interest to serving the profit interests of private, foreign corporations. The countries involved have been meeting during the year with an aim of showing "substantial progress" during the upcoming Ministerial of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Bali in December 2013.

As the talks are unofficial and secret, many PSI affiliates in countries that are affected may be unaware they are taking place. The countries currently involved are: **Australia, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Hong Kong, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Pakistan, Peru, South Korea, Switzerland, Taiwan, Turkey, the United States, and the 27 member states of the European Union.**

However, these negotiations will affect all PSI affiliates; if such an agreement is concluded, it will create a powerful new standard for liberalising services through trade agreements across the globe.

PSI has been working with its allies to learn as much as possible about the talks and organising to stop its harmful effects on public services and our members. Please find attached a **short briefing note on TISA**, outlining some of the key areas that potentially would affect public sector workers in the new agreement. PSI is producing a more comprehensive analysis for circulation later this year.

You can take immediate action by endorsing the **attached sign-on letter concerning TISA**, addressed to trade ministers, produced by PSI in conjunction with our allies at the **Our World Is Not for Sale (OWINFS) network**. Please send organizational endorsement, with country, to Manicandan at manicandan@gmail.com and copy Ms Pauline Chase at Pauline.Chase@world-psi.org

If you are in a country involved in the TISA talks, I urge you to become involved in our activities. Please forward contact details of your union representative to Daniel Bertossa at Daniel.Bertossa@world-psi.org

Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA)

Many PSI affiliates, in partnership with civil society, have been active in opposing the harmful provisions of the TPPA. To better co-ordinate this activity, PSI affiliates have started to meet by teleconference to share information and co-ordinate our actions. The TPPA affects the following countries: **Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam and the United States.**

However PSI is currently unaware of the activity of PSI affiliates in many countries affected by the TPPA. PSI is seeking information about trade union and civil society activity in these countries. If you are in a country that is affected by the TPPA and would like more information, or to become involved, please contact Daniel.Bertossa@world-psi.org

WTO Ministerial Meeting

The World Trade Organization (WTO) has announced that it will hold its 9th Ministerial Meeting in Bali on 3-6 December 2013. This ministerial meeting will deal with a number of issues of importance to PSI affiliates, including further talks on the Doha Round, trade facilitation and the potentially very dangerous TISA.

Other than the TISA, the main issue of direct concern to PSI is the **Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA)**. The TFA aims to liberalise the customs, ports and regulatory environment for imports to countries. It would create new markets in customs and shipment processing for multinational corporations. It would likely increase pressure to further privatize ports, customs operations and shipment processing, which would leave little or no space for local operators, and which has already led to a loss of jobs, downward pressure on wages and erosion of labour rights for public workers in these sectors. Further, it would restrict the policy space of sovereign governments (especially in the developing world) to pursue development, industry or fiscal objectives.

A sign-on letter is attached, addressed to members of the WTO, outlining civil society concerns with the TFA. PSI encourages all affiliates, and especially those with customs and ports workers affected by the TFA, to support the letter by sending organizational endorsement, with country, to manicandan@gmail.com and copy Pauline.Chase@world-psi.org

PSI will be attending the ministerial meeting and encourages our affiliates to consider attending – particularly those unions who have members affected by the Trade Facilitation Agreement. In some countries affiliates can register as part of the official delegation, as this will provide you with much greater access to the negotiations. To do so you will need to approach your trade minister or the ministry soon. For those not able to secure representation as part of the country delegation, you can register as non-government representatives. In this case, please list your local union as the accrediting organisation and not PSI.

The accreditation process for non-government-organisations has now opened and you can register at: <http://www.wto.org/ministerial>. Affiliates are urged to register as soon as possible as registrations close on **13 October** but may close earlier if filled sooner than that. Once you have registered it is recommended that you contact the Indonesian authorities to inquire about visas.

Please inform Pauline.Chase@world-psi.org if you have registered so that we can co-ordinate PSI activity. PSI will be forwarding further information to affiliates about our activities and preparations in advance of the meeting.

WTO Public Forum

The Public Forum is the World Trade Organization's largest annual outreach event to discuss the latest developments in world trade. The event regularly attracts over 1,500 representatives from civil society, academia, business, the media, governments, parliamentarians and inter-governmental organizations. Notably many governments' trade negotiators and ambassadors will attend. It will be held in Geneva on **1- 3 October** with English, French and Spanish interpretation. This year's theme is **expanding trade through innovation and the digital economy**. This event is an opportunity for PSI to promote the importance of public services and influence those who negotiate trade agreements that affect our members.

PSI has recently been selected to organise a forum on trade in services at the Public Forum. More information will be forwarded to affiliates when it is available.

PSI encourages affiliates who are interested in global trade matters to consider attending the WTO Public Forum. Those wishing to attend must register online at: www.wto.org/publicforum2013 and the deadline for registration is midnight, Sunday 22 September 2013. Please inform Pauline.Chase@world-psi.org if you have registered. More information can be found at: www.wto.org/english/forums_e/public_forum13_e/information_notes_e.pdf

Affiliate contact details

To influence the outcomes of trade negotiations we will need to better co-ordinate affiliate action in individual trade agreements and across World Trade Organisation (WTO) activities and better engage our labour and civil society allies in our struggle.

I ask that you forward the name and contact details of the appropriate person in your organisation who deals with trade issues to Pauline.Chase@world-psi.org. Please indicate if you have a particular interest in any of the specific agreements or events listed above.

Should you have any questions about PSI's trade work, please feel free to contact Daniel Bertossa at Daniel.Bertossa@world-psi.org

We look forward to working with you to make trade fairer for our members and communities.

In solidarity,



Rosa Pavanelli
General Secretary

Attachments:

- EB-145 proposal to increase PSI's work on trade agreements
- PSI Briefing note on TISA
- TISA sign-on letter addressed to trade ministers
- TFA sign-on letter addressed to WTO members outlining civil society concerns