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IS THE DRAGGING OF ENVIRONMENT ISSUES IN INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT JUSTIFIED? Posted

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issues in industrial development Environmental issues today are being

misused to set up protectionist trade regimes that will selectively benefit the

industrialized nations. This trend, being initiated by the World Trade

Organization (WTO) and supported by the developed nations, must be

resisted by the developing countries. The problems of the Environment will

have to be seen in a genuine, not trade distorted context if any efforts are

to be made to conserve what remains on the planet. As a matter of fact, a

discussion on Environmental issues matters is not within the purview of the

WTO. Actually it is not even equipped to deal with these issues. There are

separate international bodies to discuss the environment, as there are to

discuss all the other factors that the GATT/WTO is trying to appropriate, such

as the intellectual property rights and labor standards. So this was an essay

on Environmental issues. ESSAY ON : IS, THE DRAGGING OF ENVIRONMENT

ISSUES IN INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT JUSTIFIED? Environmental

issues tors are the most numerous. Some of the more prominent ones are

UNCED, the U. N. Commission on Environmental issues and Development,

UNEP, the U. N. Environ- mental Programme, IUCN, the International Union

for the Conservation of Nature, and the WWF, World Wide Fund for Nature.

Apart from these, there are several smaller national and international efforts.

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Given the large number of environmental bodies already in existence, and the competence with which they are handling global environmental questions, it is difficult to justify the dragging of environmental standards into the WTO platform. Despite this, if the WTO wants to link Environmental issues with trade, Gene Campaign believes that it must be with retrospective effect. The damage to the environment inflicted over the last 50 to 100 years by the industrialized nations to bolster their production, increase their trade and establish their mega economies will have to be taken into account when determining how environmental concerns will relate to trade. The WTO is aware, as is everyone else, that 20 per cent of the world's wealthy located in the North consume 80 per cent of the world's natural resources and spew out 80 per cent of its pollution. It is obvious that a trade-environment link forged by the WTO should also include conditions such as the transfer of environment-friendly technologies from the industrialized to the developing nations so that trade and development in those countries that need it most does not adversely affect the environment. By reserving the right to deny the forum to the industrialized countries that refuse to share benign technologies, the WTO would send a powerful signal that it is serious about protecting the environment. If trade has to be linked with environment then the WTO must also insist that the industrial nations demonstrate significant reductions in methane and carbon dioxide emissions. If they fail to comply, then the WTO must impose penalties on them in the trade sector. Anything else would be utter hypocrisy and rightly expose the WTO to charges of bias and manipulation. Let us reflect on the genesis of the Environmental issues-friendly technologies developed in the West which are now to set the standard for Environmental issues-friendly industrial production across the

world. It was the profits generated from the industries producing on the basis of Environmental issues destroying technologies of 50, 100 years ago that enabled the development of technologies that are environmentally more benign. The developing countries must insist on transfer of these new technologies at highly concessional rates if any consensus is to be reached on establishing an industrial ethos that will be less detrimental to the Environmental issues. Instead of a consensual approach, what is emerging is a blatant manipulation of environment issues by the industrialized nations. The Montreal Protocol, weak to begin with, has become brazenly inequitable following the recent amendment that places restrictions on the transfer and mobility of new technologies relating to chlorofluoro-carbons (CFCs). These are used in refrigeration and are thought to destroy the stratospheric . ozone layer. The Montreal Protocol assigned had agreed that the developed nations would transfer ozone-saving refrigeration technology to the developing countries and ask for reduction in the use of CFCs to save the ozone layer. Now amendments to the original treaty say that the technology cannot be exported by the developing countries if they are being funded by developed countries. So, American technology available with Malaysia can be denied to India if the U. S. so desires. The mechanism creates an instrument for turning the screws on a country and makes nonsense of the original purpose of the treaty. In the context of a trade agenda, the question of impact on the Environmental issues is closely linked to the question of . the fundamental inequity in the international trading regime. Many poor countries are dependent on commodity exports and sale of raw materials. Developing countries have a genuine fear that they may be forced to limit their trade to commodities

since Environmental issues concerns will be used to justify unfair trade restrictions against them. The inclusion and operation of apparent Environmental issues measures such as the sanitary and phyto sanitary clauses of the agricultural agreement in GATT is a case in point. Indian exports of cut flowers, which were produced in collaboration with a Dutch company in an Indo-Dutch joint venture, were refused entry into the markets of Holland. The alleged reason was that the flowers were infested with pests but the reality was that the European cut flower business was facing a glut due to domestic over-production. Indian flowers were rejected on Environmental issues grounds practically to protect European flower growers. The developing countries face another structural problem with respect to the Environmental issues. Because of the declining returns from exports, a growing external debt and the IMF-imposed Structural Adjustment Programmes, these countries are resorting more and more to desperate methods of production in which the Environmental issues is brutally assaulted. The last fish are being fished and the last forests felled for timber and these countries are slipping into Environmental issues unsustainable or even environmental destroying modes of production. The developing countries are facing another aspect of the growing environmental concern in the West. This is the enormous amount of consumer resistance that is being built up in these countries on environmental issues relating to food. In Germany, a growing movement against pesticide residues is beginning to function as a non-trade barrier against the import of Indian tea. Germany is exploiting the prevailing sentiment fully since, under its expanded aid programme, it is committed to buying tea from the non-traditional producers in Africa. It is using the consumer resistance to cut down its tea

imports from India. A famous example of environmental concern functioning as a non-trade barrier is the case of the ban imposed by the U. S. on tuna fish exports from Mexico. Mexico's waters are rich in tuna fish and this constitutes a major portion of the country's exports particularly to the U. S. and Japan. The growing displeasure on the part of American tuna fishing companies led the U. S. to resort to an Environmental issues excuse to ban the Mexican tuna import into the U. S. The real reason was protecting the American tuna fishers; the reason given was environmental concern due to the destruction of dolphins during tuna fishing. And now a final word on the utter hypocrisy of concerns relating to the Environmental issues and the trade-environment linkage. Despite the verbal hysteria on saving the Environmental issues and saving the planet, the rich in the developed countries have consistently refused to take any cutbacks in their opulent and wasteful lifestyles which place the bulk of the burden on the global Environmental issues. Japan is the largest consumer of tropical hard woods which are most difficult timber to replace. They are very slow in growing and they come from the rain forests over which there is such a hue and cry at every seminar on the environment. The wastage of energy and the production of consumer goods containing chemicals that destroy the environment, all these happen in Western countries which are screaming the loudest about environmental protection. A commitment to saving the environment will have to be seen in actions, not in empty words. It is only when the industrialized countries that are the principal polluters offer a genuine and equitable clean-up package that any global agenda is likely to emerge on saving the planet. Judging from recent reactions, it appears that the developing countries are determined not to play ball unless the

developed countries come forward in a spirit of cooperation. Till this happens, the Environmental issues will continue to take a beating.