



The World Trade eLearning Center

www.earthcouncil.com/LearnWT

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Earth Council



Press Release

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and the Earth Council establish the World Trade e-Learning Center to help achieve positive outcomes at the 2005 Hong Kong WTO Ministerial Conference

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA and Geneva, Switzerland, 6 October 2004. The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) and the Earth Council today launched the World Trade e-Learning Center, an e-learning resource that offers interactive, instructor-led courses on various aspects of world trade and WTO.

“We are very excited to be using e-learning technology to reach out to an unprecedented number of trade stakeholders around the world,” said Mark Ritchie, President of IATP. “We have never had this opportunity to offer world-class learning to so many. We hope to make a difference in preparing for the tough negotiations ahead at the Hong Kong Conference.”

The current WTO negotiations present an overwhelming agenda to member countries. The Doha Round, which is the basis for the upcoming 6th WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong in December 2005, includes ten different negotiations and at least 12 areas of work. Negotiators, trade policy makers, and participants such as NGOs and the media, particularly in developing countries, face daunting challenges in developing the knowledge and information needed to steer world trade towards sustainable development. Concurrent regional and bilateral trade negotiations further constrain the available human capacity.

“A world trade system that is symbiotic can only be achieved by member countries that know and defend their interests. The most important leveler of the international playing field is knowledge,” observed Dr. Thomas G. Aquino, Undersecretary for International Trade, Philippine Department of Trade and Industry.

“Topics like WTO negotiations are global and we need tools like e-learning to help us encourage the genuine participation of all countries. Our experience in the last 2 years of using e-learning to reach out to the world on global issues has certainly allowed us to design an approach with IATP that will enable us to enlist the world’s best trade experts to help in leveling the international playing field.” observed Reto Braun and Maurice Strong, the Earth Council’s Chairman and Founder, respectively.

The World Trade eLearning Center is hosted by the Earth Council eLearning Center (www.earthcouncil.com/learn), a state-of-art e-learning facility that has been hosting courses for a growing number of organizations that has benefited more than 1,000 learners from 70 countries.

The World Trade eLearning Center offers basic and advanced courses on the multilateral trading system and WTO, touching on subjects such as agriculture, environment, textiles, intellectual property. The Center offers two types of programs. The first is the Country Based Program, which is being piloted in the Philippines with the Department of Trade and Industry, the leading agency in developing Philippine trade policy, and in China. In the Philippines, the project will train over 200 government officers, and about 400 representatives from business, civil society and media. In China, courses will be offered in English on an experimental basis and later, depending on the results, possibly in Chinese. The second type of program is the Global Trade Literacy Program, which offers courses on key issues of the WTO agenda for negotiators, delegates, public participants, and international stakeholders such as NGOs, business, media, and academia.

The programme is made possible through the generous support of various governments, corporations, foundations and private donors. For more information contact Mr. Mark Ritchie, mritchie@iatp.org, Tel +1-612-870-3400 or Mr. Gao Pronove, gao.pronove@earthcouncil.com, Tel +1-952-922-9445.

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy promotes resilient family farms, rural communities and ecosystems around the world through research and education, science and technology, and advocacy.