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## Democratising world trade

IN Swaziland, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad provided six points in the Ezulwini Statement which the World Trade Organisation (WTO) should take note of to ensure fair and democratic rule-based trade.

The six points cover equal and reciprocal access to trade, the depoliticisation of trade issues and the emphasis by developing countries on a democratic, pro-development outcome to multilateral negotiations. Nor should new issues be brought up until satisfactory conclusions are reached on the present agenda.

However, the statement will have no effect if developing countries do not unite and find strategies to enhance their collective bargaining power. As it is, they have been reduced to passengers on the bus, their hands and tongues tied in the Green Room (the so-called negotiation room which actually serves as a bullying chamber).

The reality is that WTO gives developing countries no option other than subtle defensive manoeuvring. Built around the economic interests of the so-called "Quad" - the United States, European Union, Japan and Canada - the WTO relegates developing countries to the desperate pursuit of advantage in the interstitial spaces. In Cancun, they must play the game of reversing the roller-coaster by refusing to accept further trade liberalisation obligations until they are placed within the framework of a development agenda.

Bearing in mind that the previous WTO ministerial meeting in Doha yielded no substance to the Doha Development Agenda, developing countries must stand firm on the Ezulwini Statement and demand that the meeting in Cancun provide for immediate delivery of the promises made in Doha. True, Cancun is not designated as the culmination of the new trade round, but merely as a guidepost to the final agreement due by January 2005. This gives developing countries the space and time to push for their rights in Cancun. But they must act like the bull in the fighting ring, not sheep who bleat meekly in protest.