

Steve's post on the proposed International Renewable Energy Agency raises an important question: why do it this way? It would seem to me that if one really wanted to make a difference here, you would try to integrate renewable energy issues (and perhaps mandates) into the one international organization that really matters: the World Trade Organization.

I say that the WTO matters because (virtually) alone among world bodies, it has real enforcement teeth: its judgments are binding and can give rise to real sanctions. (The IMF might be included in this, but one would not call that a legal sanction). Fair enough: sometimes these sanctions are more apparent than real, because small nations have a very hard time of sanctioning large ones.

But the point remains: if you want to put teeth into international governance, in my view the WTO is the way to go.

Of course, Steve lets us know why the WTO isn't in the plans now: big nations aren't interested in IRENA, which means it hardly figures to be at the top of the WTO agenda. But maybe those nations who are endorsing it should raise it.

The 2009 World Social Forum, which closed a few days ago, seems to have called for the disbanding of the WTO. That's backward. the task is to figure out how to use WTO legalization for environmental protection, not to abandon it for not doing so.