

CUTS CITEE IN ACTION

APRIL-JUNE 2023



EVENTS

40 Years of CUTS in Public Action

CUTS 40th anniversary is being celebrated around the world in 2023 by organising events with eminent persons on relevant subjects on which the organisation is working.

Battling the Headwinds Challenges and Opportunities for the WTO

The first event on international trade policy was organised at the World Trade Organisation, Geneva with its dynamic Director General, Dr Ngozi Okonjo Iweala on April 06, 2023. It was a grand success attracting over 150 physical participants and nearly 700 persons worldwide on YouTube.



Okonjo-Iweala acknowledged the trust deficit hindering progress in WTO negotiations. She emphasised that actions, not just words, were crucial in building trust. She pointed to the success of the 2022 WTO Ministerial Conference (MC12) held in 2022, where Members achieved positive outcomes on various trade issues. MC12 notably bridged geopolitical divides, setting a promising precedent for MC13 in early 2024.

Okonjo-Iweala emphasised the need for WTO reform, considering the organisation's past achievements. She recognised that while the multilateral trading system had brought substantial welfare gains over the years, its rules must adapt to a rapidly changing world. She stressed the importance of multilateral agreements but also highlighted the need for a variety of instruments to address today's challenges effectively.

Iweala recognised the importance and value of civil society organisations like CUTS, which have consistently offered constructive and solution-oriented feedback to the WTO over the years. She also said that she was willing to work with organisations like CUTS to fully leverage all available resources which can help address multifaceted challenges, including capacity-building.

Mehta thanked Iweala for the interaction and said that CUTS stood ready to work towards building a wider coalition of support for the multilateral trading system and the WTO.

<https://bit.ly/3ZJsbVS>



Challenges before G20

The second event was held in New Delhi on May 28, 2023, to discuss the challenges before G20. Amitabh Kant, India's G20 Sherpa; Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General of RIS; Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Chief Coordinator for India's G20 Presidency; and Pradeep Mehta, Secretary General of CUTS International, spoke at the event. The event was attended



by over 85 distinguished participants and over 200 on YouTube.

Kant stated that CUTS embodies the spirit of a bootstrapped start-up, having grown and expanded without extensive support from external sources. Mehta's unwavering determination to pursue groundbreaking work, especially in the realm of trade, is truly commendable. It was during a time marked by rampant protectionism that hindered both economic growth and our capacity to uplift those living in poverty.

Shringla said that CUTS has shown keen interest in the G20 and is making substantial contributions through various channels, notably as part of the Think20 (T20) Initiative. It is one of our country's most prominent think tanks with a global outreach.

Chaturvedi opined that over the years, CUTS has effectively filled a significant void, and as someone who has closely observed their work since the early 1990s, including a pivotal role at the Cancun WTO Ministerial, it is evident that the organisation has left an indelible mark. He commended CUTS for its outstanding efforts and its exceptional work in Africa, where its positive impact has been widely recognised and appreciated.



www.youtube.com/watch?v=tut_8oICcOE



Enhancing Inland Water Navigation in the Brahmaputra Basin

CUTS International co-organised a hybrid inception workshop with IIT Guwahati. This workshop was organised under the project entitled “Trans Path: Water Transformation Pathways for Inland Water Navigation in The Brahmaputra Basin” in New Delhi on April 10, 2023.

The objectives of the workshop were to determine participatory, pro-active, and transformative pathways for better water futures in Brahmaputra River Basin; and to navigate diverse agenda to bring about equitable, just and sustainability-based transformations.

<https://cuts-citee.org/inland-water-navigation-in-the-brahmaputra-basin-inception-workshop/>



Fostering Trade Multilateralism through Collaborative Efforts

CUTS International organised a webinar on ‘Working Together to Promote Trade Multilateralism’ on June 20, 2023. More than 40 high-profile dignitaries attended it.

Mehta stated that there is a need to find ways for the two countries to collaborate and demonstrate their shared commitment to trade multilateralism.

Rajesh Agrawal, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India observed that a rules-based multilateral trading system is a natural corollary of India’s Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (‘the world is one family’) philosophy.

Mark Linscott, Senior Fellow, The Atlantic Council and Senior Adviser, South Asia Group stated that while collaboration between India and the US on WTO and multilateral trade issues had been limited, highlights of positive engagement included the successful conclusion in 2013 of the Trade Facilitation Agreement and the Bali decision on public stockholding for food security in developing countries, both cases where India and the US-led from the front.

R V Anuradha, Co-Founder and Partner, Clarus Law Associates noted that the world has come too far ahead in terms of economic interdependence, and there is somewhere a realisation of the need for minimum cooperation between countries to maintain the global economic system.

Bipul Chattopadhyay, Executive Director of CUTS, while thanking all the speakers said that we have to remain positive for making incremental progress for the good of the multilateral trading system.

<https://cuts-citee.org/working-together-to-promote-trade-multilateralism/>



PARTICIPATION

- Mihir Shekhar Bhonsale and Rageshree Bose attended a capacity-building session on 'Emerging Prospects from Trade Agreements – Industry Perspective,' organised by The Confederation of Indian Industry in collaboration with the Centre for WTO Studies, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade and Engineering Export Promotion Council in ITC Sonar, Kolkata on June 22, 2023.
- Pradeep S Mehta spoke at the 'Meeting of Representatives of the Permanent Delegation of the African Union' in Geneva on June 21, 2023.
- Bipul Chattopadhyay spoke at a World Bank-organised Workshop on 'Legal review of bilateral measures to facilitate cross-border navigation in the Jamuna-Brahmaputra basin' in New Delhi on May 25, 2023. He also participated in another World Bank-organised Roundtable on 'People-to-people connect and regional cooperation in South Asia' the same day.
- Sohom Banerjee participated in the civil society 'Round Table on Bangladesh's Recent Indo-Pacific Outlook and its Implications' organised by The Institute of Social and Cultural Studies (ISCS), India at The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), in Kolkata on May 10, 2023. He also participated in a seminar on 'Indo-Japan Relations and the Contemporary Developments in International Politics' organised by The Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies in collaboration with ISCS at ICCR in Kolkata on May 23, 2023.
- Mehta and Bhonsale attended the Think 20 Mid-year Conference in Mumbai from May 10-12, 2023.
- Baishali Lodh Chowdhury participated in the 'Multi-stakeholder Dialogue on Sustainability and SDGs' organised by the Centre for Responsible Business and The Bengal Chamber of Commerce & Industry on May 08, 2023.
- Deepmala Ghosh participated in a webinar on 'Equalising Opportunities: Women in Regional Trade in South Asia' organised by The World Bank on April 27, 2023.



IN MEDIA

How India can punch above its weight in global trade

Economic Times, May 25, 2023 • By Pradeep S Mehta and Abhishek Manu Singhvi

There needs to be a conscious effort to shape the public perception of international trade in India. This requires going beyond the nuts and bolts of foreign trade. Despite poor projections for the slowdown in international trade, India has set itself an ambitious target of achieving US\$2tn in exports by 2030. For this, India needs to cultivate an overall narrative of trade optimism that goes beyond just the numbers. By astutely combining narrative and numbers, India can punch above its weight in global trade.

<https://cuts-citee.org/how-india-can-punch-above-its-weight-in-global-trade/>



World Environment Day: Intensify efforts for more sustainable outcomes

Moneycontrol, June 05, 2023 • By Pradeep S Mehta and Simi TB

Trade and environment debate in the WTO is slowly coming up, an example of which is a contentious step by the European Union to apply border carbon measures on its imports. On the other hand, there is rapidly growing interest in the issue of plastic pollution, which presents a unique opportunity for action. Recent advancements made by the WTO Dialogue on Plastics Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastics Trade align with this global momentum...As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of World Environment Day today, we must think of how we can help our people and the planet by tackling pollution squarely.

<https://cuts-cart.org/world-environment-day-intensify-efforts-for-more-sustainable-outcomes/>

India's Strategic Role in BRICS – Bridging East and West

Policy Circle, June 13, 2023 • By Pradeep S Mehta and Amit Dasgupta

Brazil, Russia, India, and China came together in 2009 to present an alternative vision of the world order, contending that the prevailing U.S.-led order was unfair and exclusive. The Bretton Woods institutions established in 1944 are dominated by the U.S. and overrepresented by Europe, creating a privileged club that favoured the wealthy nations, they argued. These institutions marginalised emerging economies by neglecting their aspirations and concerns. Despite initial scepticism, BRICS has persevered, accomplishing tangible results in geopolitics rather than mere rhetoric.

<http://cuts-wdc.org/article-brics-and-the-new-world-order.htm>

Crucial decisions of WTO MC12 await members' action ahead of the Feb '24 meeting

Money Control, June 20, 2023 • By Pradeep S Mehta & Advaiyot Sharma

This time a year ago, trade ministers of WTO members adopted the Geneva Package of outcomes after intensive negotiations at the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12). MC12 will long be remembered as the ministerial where the larger interest of reviving rules-based trade multilateralism through a solution-oriented approach won the day. Despite continuing pandemic-induced stressors and the added complexities of conducting trade negotiations in the shadow of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, trade ministers led from the front and invested significant political capital in ensuring deliverables at MC12, which ultimately helped carry the day.

<https://cuts-citee.org/crucial-decisions-of-wto-mc12-awaits-members-action-ahead-of-feb-24-meeting/>