

Daily Bulletin

Conference updates, daily



This week, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is holding its 14th quadriennial conference in Nairobi, Kenya. Until Friday, July 22, this **UNCTAD 14 Conference** will set the UN agency's mandate and work priorities, and development stakeholders from all backgrounds will dialogue on global responses to the key issues affecting the global economy. With this bulletin,

CUTS is keeping you posted on the proceedings.

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Main Track

World Leaders Summit, Roundtables, High-Level Events etc.

LOWERING HURDLES FOR TRADE: TRADE COSTS, REGULATORY CONVERGENCES AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION

This session was moderated by Kevin McKinley of the International Organization for Standardization. The panellists included Rita Teotia, Secretary of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India; Tatyana Valovaya, Minister for Integration and Macroeconomic Policy, Eurasian Economic Commission; Kurt Tong, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, Department of States, United States; Yonov Frederick Agah, Deputy Director General, WTO; Palu Dhanani, Managing Director, Universal Corporation Ltd.; Edward Njoroge, Chair, Telkom, Kenya; and Roberto Acle, President, Uruguay Chamber of Commerce.

In his opening remarks, the UNCTAD Deputy Secretary-General, Joakim Reiter, recognised that globally non-tariff measures (NTMs) are on the rise and they severely impact the total exports of the least developed countries and deters small and medium sized firms from participating in global trade. There is thus a need for greater transparency and for norms to be based on international standards.

The panel reiterated that the global trade talks have moved beyond tariffs and NTMs are the focus of discussions. Some speakers recognised that NTMs serve a legitimate purpose of protecting the consumers and the environment but they also act as a barrier to trade, especially for developing countries. The speakers also recognised the rise of private standards and the need to find ways to deal with private standards. The speakers called for greater coherence, transparency, regulatory cooperation on standards and regulations among nations. In this regard, lessons can be drawn from the work done among countries at the regional levels, those that have set examples for regional coherence and cooperation.

Furthermore, standards have the effect of raising costs, and greater efforts are required to ensure that small and medium enterprises are not left out of global trade. The cost of compliance with standards impedes the competitiveness of small firms and small economies. At the same time, while standards pose a challenge, they also present an opportunity for increasing trade. The

panel also recognised that the standard setting processes should be based on international standards engage actively with all stakeholders.

ROADMAP FOR RECOVERY: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROSPECTS OF THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY THROUGH ADDRESSING OBSTACLES TO TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

UNCTAD can play a big role in supporting the recovery of Palestine by championing its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Though WTO agreements do not allow for export subsidies, Palestine will be able to benefit from the WTO regulations on agriculture which allow for production subsidies. Countries such as the United States of America and other developed countries have benefited from such WTO provisions. It has therefore been proposed that UNCTAD needs to assist Palestine garner the necessary political goodwill to have them accepted as members of the WTO under the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) category.

Some stakeholders were of the opinion that UNCTAD needs to speak up on the cost of occupation of the Palestinian territories to their economies. It has been estimated that if the occupation of Palestinian territories is addressed total Gross Domestic Product of the country would double. The emphasis on the cost of the occupation of Palestine territories has cost them in terms of attracting Foreign Direct Investments. This is mainly because Palestine is a high political risk area with myriad of land occupation issues.

BUILDING ECONOMIC RESILIENCE FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE

To attain the objectives of Agenda 2030, the vulnerabilities of the poor must be a global concern and a shared obligation. There is the need for targeted policies to empower the most vulnerable segments of our societies, such as women and rural communities. Additionally, nations must foster diversification and productive capacity building in the most vulnerable and weak countries. To lock in our hard-won development gains, nations also need to build firewalls to deflect evolving challenges such as persistent market volatility, slumping commodity prices, flagging trade growth, as well as natural disasters, climate change, and biodiversity loss.

H.E. Mr. Axel Addi, Minister of Commerce and Industry, Monrovia, Liberia said that “Government interventions through the implementation of targeted policies can be helpful in addressing these challenges. Liberia over the years has evolved laws and policies which mandate that about 30% of all government procurement be given to small and medium enterprises. Through these initiatives, some of the SME and informal traders have started formalizing their trading practices to put them in a position to be able to bid for government procurement. ”

Mr. Cheick Sidi Diarra, Former Special Advisor on Africa and High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island States

Indicated that since the slump in commodity prices destroy economic gains and put government policies and plans out of gear, diversification of the economies, and value addition would bring about needed resilience to the economies of most developing countries.

Economic tools though necessary and critical are not sufficient to bring about built-to-last economic legacies, the quality of governance, protection of intellectual property rights, enabling businesses climate, better human development index (HDI), investment in science and technology and also fiscal measures which includes saving during period of economic bust. These are very critical in ensuring pro-poor growth.

Other speakers highlighted on the need to strengthen regional integration by promoting intra and inter trading among nations and thereby removing non-tariff barriers.

Finally, it was concluded that the development of trade infrastructures and the stoppage of illicit funds out of Africa hold the key to making the continent more resilient.

LIFE AFTER ACCESSION TO THE WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION: LAUNCH OF POST ACCESSION SUPPORT STRATEGY

The session was organized as a platform for launching a strategy for providing support to countries that have recently joined the World Trade Organization (WTO). During the session, the Deputy Secretary General of the WTO stated that accession is a long and difficult process that requires technical and financial support even after full membership is achieved to realize the expected trade and development benefits.

The recently acceded members, Liberia and Afghanistan, shared their post accession strategies. Liberia stated that it was committed to trade facilitation, trade and economic diversification, and adoption of Economic Community of West Africa States' (ECOWAS) common external tariff (CET). Afghanistan's strategy included improvement of business environment to remove tariff and non-tariff barriers; trade facilitation; supporting small and midsize enterprises (SMEs) through capacity building; human resource capacity building in public and private sector; and increased participation in WTO activities.

The participating delegates emphasised that the post accession strategy should focus on trade facilitation; integrating WTO commitments with national trade and development agenda to ensure success; and implementation of measures/ policies that enhance job creation and economic development. The donor community, development partners, and developed countries were urged to continue providing technical and financial support to newly acceded countries to realize the full benefit of WTO membership.

In his concluding remarks, the Deputy Secretary General for WTO emphasized that WTO membership does not guarantee automatic trade benefits. Thus, members must develop and implement effective post accession strategies that focus on improving the trading environment, attracting investment, participation in WTO policy dialogues, and collaboration among stakeholders (national governments, donors, WTO, and UNCTAD etc.) to realize membership benefits.

WOMEN AS AGENTS FOR ECONOMIC CHANGE: SMALLHOLDER FARMING, FOOD SECURITY, AGRICULTURAL UPGRADING AND RURAL ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION IN THE LEAST DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

The panellists in the first session, 'Closing the gender gap in agriculture – Towards gender sensitive rural transformation' were Ms Zenebu Tadesse, Minister for Women and children, Ethiopia and Ms Sekai Nzenza, Head of Public Affairs, Amatheon Agri, Zimbabwe.

Ms Tadesse highlighted the different initiatives that Ethiopia had in place to promote women's involvement in agriculture by facilitating their access to land and the labour market. Ms Nzenza then spoke about the Outgrower programme that they were implementing that provides women with access to knowledge and markets and also helps add value to what the women grow. Mr Kostas Stamoulis, Assistant Director General, Economic and Social Development Department, FAO responded to the remarks and noted that women are as good as farmers as men but their productivity is lower because of lack of access to inputs; as such, gender equality must be guaranteed both on paper and in practice.

The second session panellists on 'Enhancing rural women's economic empowerment through off-farm activities' included H.E Mr Jayanta Chand, Minister of Commerce, Nepal. He noted that ensuring that women engage in value addition and its linkages is extremely important particularly given that women's empowerment begins with agricultural and agro-based innovation. As the respondent, Ms Arancha González, Executive Director, International Trade Centre, noted that it is important to make sure that policies do not create gender gaps.

In the final session on 'Promoting coordination mechanisms at the national and local levels to advance gender-sensitive rural development', H.E Faizaz Siddiq Koya, Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism, Fiji began by highlighting that Fiji has mainstreamed gender policy in its trade policy and as a result, their policies are now fostering mobility. Ms Pauline Ngare, Director Hand in Hand Eastern Africa spoke on the importance of coordination, transparency and accountability in formulating needs-based policies. She noted that it was important to make sure that these policies were inclusive. Ms Diana Ofwona, Regional Director for Sub-Saharan, UN Women noted that if the process of attaining the SDGs was not inclusive, they will take 81 years to achieve therefore it is important to ensure that women were included in the conversation. She concluded by saying that if women are incorporated effectively, women can serve as change agents for economic growth and also help in our fight against climate change.



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CUTS International's Activities Today

PEOPLE FIRST PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS CAN BECOME INSTRUMENT OF PARTNERSHIP TO IMPLEMENT THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS





CUTS Institute for Regulation and Competition (CIRC) organised a session on importance of People first Private Public Partnerships (PPP) for achieving the sustainable development goals.

Dr. Arvind Mayaram (former Finance Secretary, Government of India) Chairman, CIRC, chaired the seminar and made a presentation on the subject. He noted that there is a need for shift in the PPP model from finance and risk allocation to improvement and social prosperity. People first PPPs are the way ahead as they integrate beneficiary communities in the entire project life-cycle from design stage to monitoring outcomes.

The panelists comprised Lekey Dorji, Minister of Economic Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan; Deodat Maharaj, Deputy Secretary-General, Economic & Social Development, Commonwealth Secretariat; James Donovan, Member, Business Advisory Board of International PPP Centre of Excellence, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe; Mia Mikic, Chief Trade Policy Analysis, Trade Investment and Innovation Division, United Nations Economic & Social Commission for Asia Pacific; Beltus Etchu, CEO, African Forum Scotland and Gilles Betis, Chair, IEEE Smart Cities Initiative.

It was noted that Bhutan has developed a gross national happiness model, which puts people at the centre of development. It was possible to design people first PPPs with acceptable rate of return for investors. PPPs can help in building economic and social infrastructure, and increase employment opportunities. To achieve this, rules of engagement between public and private sector, including dispute settlement must be transparent and clear. The role of data and the requirement to reduce information asymmetry to disseminate the benefits of PPPs was also emphasised. It was mentioned that PPP projects must not merely be for the people but 'with' the people, and thus stakeholder engagement at each stage of PPP project was necessary.

There was scope for public and private sector to learn from each other and work towards SDGs. The need for improving transparency, accountability and disclosure, both by government as well as private partners was highlighted to make sure PPPs work for people.

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