



Reforming and Strengthening the WTO

Wednesday, 2 December 2009, 10:00-12:00 hours
Seventh WTO Ministerial Conference, NGO Centre
(Centre de Conférence Varembe, 9-11 rue de Varembe, Room C)

Access to the venue is possible only for those who have been accredited to attend the Seventh WTO Ministerial Conference

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is holding its 7th Ministerial Conference in Geneva, Switzerland, from 30 November till 2 December 2009. This will be an opportunity to discuss the ways in which this organization that is at the centre of the international trading system can be reformed and strengthened so that it continues to play its role in global economic governance. Some important topics for discussion include enhancement of inclusiveness, transparency and efficiency; and ways and means of dealing with substantive issues of interest to WTO Members, especially developing countries that constitute the vast majority of the membership.

The call for WTO reform and strengthening is not new. Many able minds have been devoted to the analysis of the challenges faced by the organization with a view to making proposals for reform. Notable among these are the report, titled "The Future of the WTO", commonly known as the Sutherland Report (WTO: 2005); and the report of the First Warwick Commission titled, "The Multilateral Trade Regime: Which Way Forward?" (University of Warwick: 2008).

Several WTO Members too, often under the leadership of India, have been raising issues relating to WTO reform. In this context, India also presented a set of concrete proposals for strengthening the WTO in the run up to the coming WTO Ministerial Conference (WTO/GC/W/605, 3 July 2009). This call was supported by a number of other WTO Members and has led to the acceptance of a proposal by a group of countries for the establishment of a deliberative process by the upcoming Ministerial Conference to consider these issues (WT/MIN(09)/W/1, 16 October 2009).

A valuable recent addition to this impressive body of literature and advocacy work is a publication authored by Faizel Ismail, Head of the South African Delegation to the WTO titled "Reforming the World Trade Organization: Developing Countries in the Doha Round" (CUTS-FES: 2009).

Recognising the relevance and importance of these issues, and noting the valuable contributions of the recent publication by Faizel Ismail and the Indian proposal, CUTS International and FES are organising this panel discussion. The panel consisting of eminent scholars and practitioners will be moderated by Pradeep S. Mehta, Secretary General CUTS International and member of the First Warwick Commission. CUTS and FES are confident that this panel discussion will contribute to the refinement of many ideas regarding the reform and strengthening of the WTO.