

Project Review Meeting
WTO Doha Round & South Asia: Linking Civil Society with Trade Negotiations (SAFIT-II)
New Delhi, December 21-22, 2006

OBJECTIVE *The objective of the meeting is to bring together the project stakeholders (five partners and three experts) to review the preparatory phase activities of the project that have been carried out till date. The meeting will provide an opportunity to the respective partners to present their draft research paper prepared under the project and thus have a thorough discussion. It will help in finalising the draft research papers and simultaneously ensure the coordination and coherence of the second phase of activities, taking account of the priorities and circumstances of the participating countries.*

BACKGROUND

CUTS Centre for International Trade Economics & Environment (CUTS CITEE), Jaipur, India is implementing the phase-II of the project entitled, "WTO Doha Round & South Asia: Linking Civil Society with Trade Negotiations". The project has been named as 'South Asia Forum for International Trade' (SAFIT-II). It aims to establish linkage between the civil society organisations (CSOs) and research institutions while conducting advocacy with the governments. Thus one of the objectives of this project is to generate negotiating inputs and assist the South Asian trade negotiators and policy makers while taking into account the position of civil society (including NGOs, business bodies, trade unions, women groups, particularly those working on gender and trade linkages) for the successful completion of the Doha Round.

Like SAFIT-I that was initiated in January 2005, the phase II of this project is been implemented in five South Asian countries, viz. Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka in partnership with various organisations. The project focus on the issues identified from the Hong Kong World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial Declaration in December 2005. The duration of the phase II of the project is 15 months i.e. from April 2006 to June 2007 and is divided into two Components. The first part (Component-I) of the research was limited to those aspects covered under the WTO Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration. While, the second part (Component-II) of the research would focus on domestic preparedness of the countries to face the challenges of trade liberalisation and globalisation. This part will commence after the completion of first part of research focusing on issues related to trade negotiations.

To apprise, under SAFIT-I research analysis on five key issues of 'July Framework Agreement' was undertaken. As an outcome of the project, a book entitled, 'South Asian Position in the WTO Doha Round: In Search of a *True* Development Agenda' was published and released at Hong Kong during the WTO Ministerial. On the whole the project complements and does not in anyway substitute similar projects operating in South Asia.

CONTEXT

Although there is an impasse in the negotiation process, the recently concluded Hong Kong WTO Ministerial did throw some more pertinent issues for future research and advocacy. Based on this Ministerial declaration, five cross cutting core issues was selected for further research work to be carried out by the five research partners in the five South Asian countries. The researchers were asked to analyse the possible changes that could take place in the negotiating position of a country in light of the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration which would help to further consolidate the positions of the South Asian countries. On each issue covered in a particular topic, the research has to take into consideration concerns and perceptions of different stakeholders (NGOs, trade bodies, industry bodies, trade unions, WTO experts, women group, etc). The organisations from five South Asian countries are undertaking the research on the following areas:

- Services
- Non Tariff Barriers
- Preference Erosion and Aid for Trade
- Agriculture: Special Products and Special Safeguard Measures
- Duty and Quota Free Market Access for LDCs

This research study presents some key messages and lessons learnt from the feedback process by trade officials, providers and other stakeholders.

Given this context, this project review meeting is organised to review the progress in Component I of this project and to review the situation of the Doha negotiations. The meeting would also identify key issues that are hampering the progress in generating negotiating inputs and in assisting the negotiators and policy makers in the project countries. This meeting would also formulate recommendations for future actions by the project partners. These actions would be classified according to strategies of policy and management, financial support and research. Thus to be specific, purpose of the review meeting would be as follows:

- Provide issue-wise presentations on the draft research papers prepared.
- Identify major innovative approaches and strategies that have been adopted in the project; major changes and their impact on the project; and major issues/problems concerning project implementation.
- To discuss strategies regarding how to further generate negotiating inputs and assist the negotiators and policy makers in the project countries.
- To develop country-specific future action plans concerning the work of the projects in participating countries, particularly relating to the dissemination of the outcomes of the innovative project.

The contribution of all invited participants would be of great value providing an opportunity to exchange views on project activities and create positive momentum in mobilising the participation of all the key stakeholders.

THE EVENT

Design: To involve representatives of project partners from all five South Asian countries including India and all the three project advisors, Economic Counsellors & Government Officials of respective countries, Experts and other relevant Stakeholders in a one and half-day meeting. It will start in the morning of 21st December. The deliberations will be organised in a structured form so that there will be time for debate and discussions. Recommendations will be taken forward for the successful implementation of the project.

VENUE

Scope Complex, CGO. Lodi Road, (Bhabha Hall)

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME

Thursday, 21 December 2006

1000 – 1100 Welcome & Objective of the meeting

1100 – 1130 Tea/Coffee

1130 – 1300 Presentation 1

1300 – 1400 Lunch

1400 – 1530 Presentation 2

1530 – 1600 Tea/Coffee

1600 – 1730 Presentation 3

Friday, 22 December 2006

0930 – 1100 Presentation 4

1100 – 1130 Tea/Coffee

1130 – 1300 Presentation 5

1300 – 1400 Lunch

1400 – 1500 Closing Remarks

Organised by: CUTS CITEE