

CUTS-FES-Evian Group Session at the WTO Public Forum 2008

What Future for Global Economic Governance?

Potential Role of the WTO

25 September 2008, 1115-1315 hrs, Room W, Ground Floor, WTO Main Building

This Session will be held at the 2008 WTO Public Forum, 'Trading into the Future' under the Sub-theme 3: 'The Way Forward'. It (Session 18 of the WTO Public Forum 2008) will be jointly organised by CUTS, the Geneva Office of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and the Evian Group at IMD, Lausanne.

The Theme

This Session will argue that global economic governance should be dominated by the overall goal and principles of sustainable development. As part of this system, WTO should also take into account this objective in order not to undermine it and rather take steps to actively promote it. There is no firm and concrete commitment by the rich countries to reform their trade regimes substantially, to provide effective opportunities and to take concomitant measures to assist the poor countries in their fight against poverty. In the coming time, even when Doha Round of the WTO is completed, its effective implementation by way of accommodating development aspect will depend on various other factors, which can be tackled through enhancing global governance for development. Thus, the role of the WTO comes to play its part by way of re-instilling the accountability factor among its member nations. Since WTO is a member driven organisation, the members themselves will need to play a major role in its future governance for enforcing rules and ensuring the development outcomes of multilateral trade liberalisation. Furthermore, the onus lies more on rich countries to ensure fair play and positive discrimination in favour of poor countries.

Thus, keeping this in mind, a civil society dialogue is proposed to identify the role of WTO in the global economic governance system and how it could become more development-enhancing. To identify the scope for and measures by developed and the more advanced developing countries' playing a fuller and more effective role in facilitating growth and development in the rest of the world (particularly in the poorer world), i.e. beyond their national borders and regional economic groupings. Basing on this, the session aims to formulate recommendations for making the global economic governance effective for (sustainable) development.

The Questions

- What is the impact of the often acrimonious nature of the Doha negotiations and the stalemates that regularly arose by the WTO Members on LDCs and small vulnerable states and the prospects for achieving their enhanced and beneficial participation of in world trade?
- What would be/could be the possible shape of future global economic governance and WTO's role in it in the light of a scenario building process to be organised by FES in June 2008 with academic experts, professionals of international organisations, representatives of NGOs and trade unions, diplomats and politicians?
- What should be the scope of cooperation between the developed and developing (including least developed) countries under the Aid for Trade initiative and beyond in order to strengthen the link between trade, growth and poverty reduction in the developing world?

The Panel

Moderator Rashid S. Kaukab, Deputy Director, CUTS Geneva Resource Centre, Geneva

Speakers

- Winfried Veit, Director, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Geneva
- Debapriya Bhattacharya, Ambassador & Permanent Representative to the WTO, Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the UN in Geneva
- James Howard, Director, Economic & Social Policy, International Trade Union Confederation, Brussels
- Simon Evenett, Professor, International Trade and Economic Development, University of St. Gallen, Switzerland

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