

Report on Seminar

**"MAINSTREAMING DEVELOPMENT ISSUES
IN PAKISTAN'S TRADE POLICIES"**

April 12, 2008

**Privatisation Commission of Pakistan Conference
Room, Constitution Avenue Islamabad**

Organised By

**Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad
&
Foreign Trade Institute of Pakistan**

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and Foreign Trade Institute of Pakistan (FTIP) jointly organised one-day seminar on "*Mainstreaming Development Issues in Pakistan's Trade Policy*" on April 12, 2008 at the Privatisation Commission, Islamabad. The seminar was organised in the backdrop of UNCTAD XII, which is being held in Accra during April 20-25, 2008.

Objectives

The objective of the seminar was to discuss and debate the linkages between trade and development in the backdrop of UNCTAD XII.

Background

Developing and maintaining positive linkages between trade and development is becoming a daunting challenge both for the national and international trade policies negotiators. Developing countries' governments are finding it particularly hard as neither the developed countries nor the entrenched interests at home, make it easy for them to mainstream development in their trade policies. The task of national trade policy formulation becomes even more difficult as the myriad linkages between trade and development are academically not understood very well. It is realised that the international trade needs to promote equitable and sustainable development in this era of globalisation. UNCTAD XII, which is being held in Accra during April 20-25, 2008, is expected to advance the trade and development linkages debate at the international level.

All the UNCTAD member countries are making suitable preparations to participate effectively in UNCTAD XII to make their voice heard. The lead up to Accra has also given an opportunity to the relevant stakeholders in member countries to discuss and debate the trade and development linkages so that these linkages are better understood and projected both at the national and international level. Realising the importance of the above mentioned issues, SDPI and FTIP organised a seminar to discuss and debate the linkages between trade and development in the backdrop of UNCTAD XII.

Participants

Eminent researchers, high profile government officials members from the civil society organisations (CSOs) and the media attended seminar. In all, 51 participants attended the seminar.

Inaugural Session

The seminar was inaugurated by **Ashraf Khan**, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Commerce. He applauded the effort of FTIP and SDPI for organising this policy dialogue and wished to arrange many more useful interactions in the future. He highlighted the contribution of UNCTAD to promote and protect the legitimate interests of the developing world. He said that a major challenge for Pakistan is how to shape and use World Trade Organisation (WTO) Agreements as tools for sustainable development and poverty-reducing economic growth. While developing trade policy, the Ministry of Commerce embarks upon a comprehensive exercise of consultations with all the relevant stakeholders with a view to make it development friendly. He hoped that this Seminar

would provide useful inputs, not only for UNCTAD XII, but also for the next trade policy of Pakistan.

Ashraf Khan stated that finding the balance between unprecedented opportunities and formidable challenges of globalisation would not only be the principle challenge to the delegates of UNCTAD XII, but also a challenge for the Ministry of Commerce and all the institutions and individuals who cherish the goal of sustainable and equitable development in Pakistan.

The Ministry realises, he continued, that trade liberalisation, economic growth, sound policies and good governance are keys to poverty reduction and the government has been trying to use the right instruments and resources to realise Pakistan's development goals. Pakistan's economy is well integrated with the rest of the world, but this integration is also presenting many challenges to us, he argued. The country needs to find the right mix between international agreements and national policy autonomy while moving towards a more development-friendly international and national trade and development framework. Pakistan would like to explore the possibilities and prospects of 'policy diversity' and 'policy space' to overcome these challenges, he added. At the end, he congratulated both FTIP and SDPI on holding the seminar and wished both the institute the best in their future endeavors to promote healthy debates on issues of national importance and proposed new ideas in this connection.

First Session: "Linkages between Trade & Development in Pakistan"

First technical session was dedicated for discussing the *"Linkages between trade and development in Pakistan"*. H U Baig, ex-Finance Secretary and Auditor General of Pakistan and the present Chairman Board of Governors of SDPI chaired the session. Dr Pervaiz Tahir ex-Chief Economist of Pakistan, Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences of GC University, Lahore and Dr Sohail Jehangir Malik, Chairman Innovative Development Strategy, Islamabad were invited to deliver the lecture. Dr Safdar Sohail DG FTIP and Dr Sajjad Akhter Director Center for Research on Poverty Reduction and Income Distribution were designated discussants.

Speakers and participants agreed that domestic commerce has a very strong role in determining the fate of the country in the international market. The experience of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other fast growing developing economies supports the argument. Unfortunately, the state of domestic commerce of Pakistan is very poor and below the any international standards. Competition in production of good quality products is almost absent. There are only a few big players (Mafias) – both in production and retail markets – which control the entire market. It is quite evident from the recent sugar, wheat and stock exchange crises.

The Ministry recently conducted a study on the state of domestic commerce. The findings of the study are not very encouraging. Well established markets in all sectors always create jobs. Competitive markets also encourage the brand development and expand business. However, in Pakistan job creation is nominal and most of the entities show sole

ownership and worked in very limited area. Brand development is completely absent in Pakistan's domestic markets. Furthermore, there are a number of entry barriers for the new comers along with corruption and malfunctioning of government machinery. Modern technology use is very low and it is a discouraging fact that local traders and producers are still working on the traditional lines and are not ready to change. Use of information technology is lowest in Pakistan.

Dr Perveez criticised the inefficiencies in government procedures and called for the reorientation of government officials to handle the issues more competently. Competency can create a difference in handling the issues and day to day business. He defined the development in words of Mahbub-ul-Haq, "The basic objective of development is to create an enabling environment in which people can enjoy long, healthy and creative lives". He said that trade can be beneficial if trickle down mechanisms are rightly defined and implanted. However, in Pakistan's case these mechanism are not well defined and the country is paying the price, he argued. He pointed out that the era before the introduction of structural adjustment programs had been very encouraging. In this era, poverty and inequalities decreased and growth rate increased, he added.

Table 1: Trends of Poverty, Inequality and Growth in Pakistan

Decades	Poverty	Inequality	Growth
1960s	↑	↓	↑
1970s	↓	↑	↓
1980s	↓	↓	↑
1990s	↑	↑	↓
2000s	↓	↑	↑

However, after the introduction of structural adjustment programs, Pakistan could not keep the pace and the situation was reversed in the 1990s. Although government statistics showed some improvement in poverty and growth indicators, this is still controversial. He concluded his presentation with the message, "poverty and inequality will increase if growth is uncertain".

Dr Sohail J Malik argued that trade policy in Pakistan is hostage to fiscal and monetary policy and to a culture of rent seeking behaviour by Pakistani manufacturers that perpetuates inefficiency and lack of competitiveness. He was of the view that trade policy in Pakistan is announced after the budget. First tariff and other parameters are defined in other policies and then comes the trade policy, and hence, there remains very little space for trade policy developers to take initiatives and develop trade policy according to their mandate, he argued.

Dr Malik pointed out the major weaknesses of Pakistan's macro-policy environment and said that revenue and expenditure structure of the country are not complementary. Revenue of structure of Pakistan is not working well and revenue remains below the estimated targets, while expenditures are increasing and always remain above the revenue. Most of the expenditures are non-developmental expenditures dominated by the government consumption expenditures, which leads to fiscal deficit and government has no specific policies to tackle this fiscal deficit, he reasoned. The government usually tries

to finance through the internal borrowing or from remittances. After 9/11, remittances increased very sharply and the government started to use it to finance the fiscal deficit instead of investing it in some productive sectors. According to Dr Malik, government major financing sources were:

- foreign grants including terror related receipts;
- loans from donors;
- Earthquake related receipts;
- private sector inflows in the form of FDI mostly in telecom and portfolio investment;

These sources are not permanent sources and these will create problems in the future.

Dr Malik said that exchange rate management is becoming more important in globalisation and Pakistan is unable to define relevant policies to address the issue. In efforts to control the inflation, the State Bank of Pakistan overvalued the Rupee, which is negatively affecting Pakistan's competitive edge in international markets, he argued. Some researchers also cite this as a major cause of the fiscal and CA deficit. The State Bank of Pakistan claims that the Rupee is only overvalued around 2-5 percent. However, the opinion of several agencies is different, i.e. International Monetary Fund (IMF) says it is 10 percent, while World Bank (WB) estimates as 17 percent.

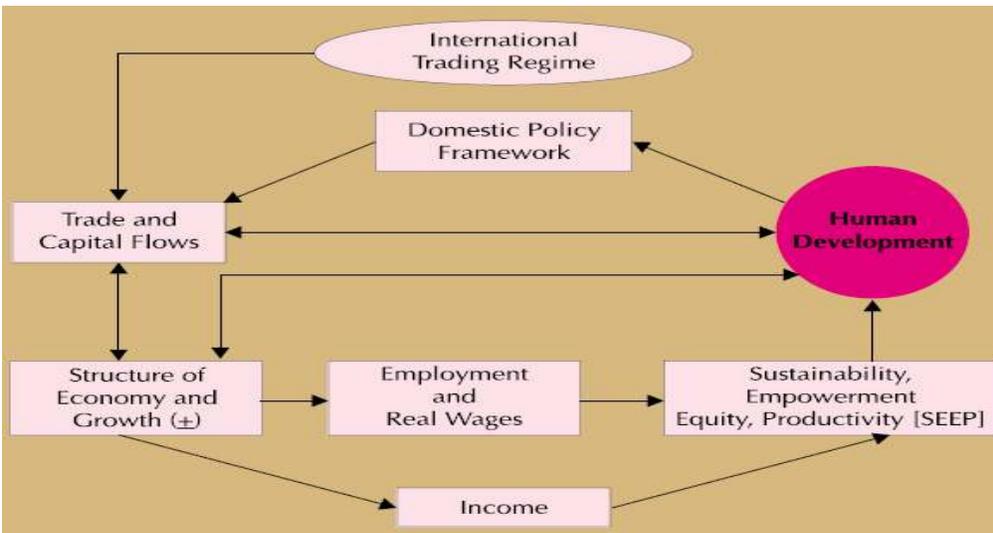
Owing to these flawed policies, i.e. fiscal and monetary, which are main determinants of trade policy, Pakistan was never able to develop and implement the right trade policy. Pakistan could not succeed to benefit up to the desired level from the globalisation due to weak trade policy and flawed monetary and fiscal policies. Growth created due to trade could not transmit for the welfare of people. Studies conducted by Kemal and Siddiqui (2003), Anwar (2001), Kemal and Hyder (1997), Orden et al (2005) and other researchers concluded that poverty reduction in Pakistan due to trade is very nominal, he added.

Dr. Malik concluded his presentation with five point agenda that Pakistan should adopt, and which are:

- Set out a clear national competitiveness strategy;
- Improve the general business climate;
- Upgrade Pakistan's technological capacity;
- Promote skills development; and
- Reduce anti-export bias.

Trade changes the structure of the economy as well as the rate of growth, which in turn has implications for employment both of labour and capital, **Dr. Sajjad** pointed out while speaking at the occasion. **Dr. Sajjad** said that trade has forward and backward linkages with development (see Figure 1). Trade introduces competition, which leads to skill development, higher income and technical competency. Policy advocacy relating trade regime is a powerful tool to achieve the above mentioned goals. Trade can also create inequalities for example skilled labour benefit than unskilled labour. It can also introduce high capital technologies, which replace high labour extensive technologies, he added.

Figure 1: Trade Linkages with Development



Dr Sajjad shared his study with the audience about the relation of trade and development. He tested the hypothesis "Trade-Growth-HDI-Trade". Trade/GDP ratio was a dependent variable and independent variables included HDI, literacy rate, life expectancy, real GDP index. His study concluded that none of the independent variables (Granger) impact Trade/GDP ratio neither trade/GDP (Granger) impact HDI, literacy rate, life expectancy, real GDP index. However, HDI and its sub-components (literacy rate, life expectancy and real GDP) impact positively on trade/GDP ratio but statistically are not significant. According to study findings, one percentage increase in:

- Life expectancy leads to 0.68 percent increase in Trade/GDP ratio
- HDI leads to 0.31 percent increase Trade/GDP ratio
- Literacy ratio leads to 0.18 percent increase in Trade/GDP ratio
- Real GDP leads to 0.16 percent increase in Trade/GDP ratio

Dr Sajjad concluded his presentation with an 8-point agenda to make trade more development-friendly. It includes:

1. Invest for competitiveness
2. Adopt Strategic trade policy
3. Restore a focus on agriculture
4. Combat jobless growth
5. Introduction of new tax regime
6. Better management of maintain stable exchange rate
7. Meet the requirements of globalisation but at the cost of social development
8. Trade with neighbours should be promoted

Dr Safdar Sohail Director Geeneral, FTIP, said that coordination among different ministries and stakeholders should be strengthened, as target-oriented coordination can make a difference. The Ministry of Commerce always welcomed the open discussion and

played its positive role in development of more development-oriented policies. There are certain constraints and issues which hinder and undermine the performance of the ministry. However, in recent years ministry and government has taken concrete steps to tackle these issues, he informed. Today, Pakistan's trade policy is more open and development-oriented as compared to a few years back.

Dr Sohail further added that policy coherence is other important aspect though in Pakistan the concept of "policy coherence" is not fully recognised and understood. Pakistan is missing this important aspect of policy – both at the national and international level. He explained that policy coherence does not mean only coherence in objectives but also in implementing instruments. He told the audience that FTIP is trying to bridge this gap.

HU Baig, Chair of the session said that the country has to revisit its taxation system and policies, as these are not trade and development oriented. The present system is only serving an elite group of people at the cost of poor people. Growth observed positive trends in the previous decade and there is no second view, however, the people differ from government on the growth rate, he argued. Then the question arises why the status of the poor has not improved. The simple answer is that the government was not able to devise trickle down mechanisms to transfer the benefits of trade to poor. In addition, the government also shifted the tax burden on the poor and consumers. **Baig** urged the government to devise new mechanisms and alternatives to address the issues. It is also important to make trade benefits tangible at gross root level.

Second Session: "Promises and Processes of UNCTAD and Pakistan"

The second technical session was on "Promises and Processes of UNCTAD and Pakistan". The session was chaired by **Dr Ishrat Hussain**, ex-Governor of State Bank of Pakistan. **Hasan Javed**, Director General (UN and Economic Coordination) Ministry of Foreign Affairs and **Itiqa Zaidi**, Project Director Trade and Transport Facilitation Project Ministry of commerce were speakers. **Dr Abid Q Suleri**, Executive Director of SDPI and **Teepu Sulatn**, Director, Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) were designated discussants.

Hasan Javed outlined the history and processes of UNCTAD vis-à-vis Pakistan's role and said that the prime objective of UNCTAD was to work for the establishment of linkages of trade with development objectives, exploring how trade can be managed to work for the poor. Over the last 44 years, UNCTAD has played a key role in mainstreaming the development concerns of developing and least developed countries (LDCs) on international trade scene. The more recent establishment of the WTO has complicated the work of UNCTAD, as developed countries are trying to shift the focus from UNCTAD to the WTO and to minimise its role only to technical cooperation, he informed. Governments in the developed world, in efforts to undermine UNCTAD's role in trade policy-making, have taken defensive positions against the organization, he argued.

As the Doha Development Round (DDR) enters the final stages of negotiations, developing countries and LDCs are striving hard to make the round more development-friendly. However, developed countries, the WTO, and other IFIs, have their own agendas to guard. The importance of UNCTAD in facilitating negotiations has increased manifold, as it serves as a forum advocating the development concerns of LDCs and developing countries. The schedule of UNCTAD XII is very crucial because the DDR is about to conclude and WTO ministerial conference will also be held. It is good opportunity for the developing countries and LDCs to raise their concerns and to formulate appropriate policies to tackle the issues at UNCTAD for better negotiation at WTO, he argued.

As a member of UNCTAD, Pakistan can play a very positive and significant role to advocate development-friendly trade policies at UNCTAD XII and DDR. To do so, according to **Javeed**, the nation's representatives to these forums must remain abreast of the latest information and developments in international negotiations. A strong domestic policy framework and governance structure is also a prerequisite for the promotion and support of development friendly trade policies at international level. Civil society and the private sector input in formulating these policies can also strengthen the government negotiation position, he concluded.

Irtiqia Zaidi briefed the audience on the impact of trade, policy environment, UNCTAD and Ministry of Commerce's perspective on these issues and said that international and national policy coherence is most important for the attainment of development goals. This will also guarantee the enabling environment for sustainable growth and poverty reduction. UNCTAD will be a good platform to discuss these issues at the international level. Energy will be the most crucial instrument for sustainable growth and increasing productive capacities of economy. International price of oil and other energy sources are increasing which is posing a serious threat. Furthermore, these sources also cause serious damage to environment and are catalysing climatic changes, he argued. The Ministry of Commerce and the government are looking at alternative energy sources and are promoting bio-fuel and bio-diesel, he concluded.

Zaidi argued that technology up-gradation will be most crucial in increasing the productive capacity of Pakistan and other developing countries and LDCs. He called for optimal intellectual property rights (IPRs), which ensure and support research and creation of knowledge as well as dissemination of this research and knowledge. He concluded with the advice that trade integration should not be seen as an end in itself, but rather as a means for technological upgrading and increasing domestic value addition.

Dr Abid Q Suleri said that the establishment of the Bretton Woods institutions in 1944 was responsible for a phenomenal explosion in international trade that has brought the world's economies on a path towards increasing interdependence through globalisation. The ratification of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) commemorates the international community's first step towards realising the dream of a world of liberalised trade. These efforts were renewed and accelerated with the establishment of the WTO in 1994. With an idealised vision of trade's crucial role in achieving the kind of

comprehensive development that can improve the welfare of humanity, the WTO has worked to create a level playing field. However, under some conditions and limitations, trade can induce sustainable growth and development in the world economy, and in doing so help developing countries and LDCs to accelerate the process of growth and development, he argued. Pakistan is still far away from achieving the level playing field, he added.

Theoretically speaking, **Dr Suleri** continued, the supportive role of trade in development is a well-established fact and the trade-related growth of recently developed economies serves as a reference by which the positive role of trade in development can be indexed. However, the regime of world trade today may no longer support development-promoting trade, as a plethora of literature and research is available to counter this claim under the current trade circumstances. It is interesting to note that the unanimous concurrence among researchers is that an unfair system of trade at the international level is responsible for this dilemma, he argued. Researchers and institutions working on trade have by and large concluded that international institutes relating to trade, proceeding from the GATT embody fundamental flaws. Trade-related bodies have failed to define the linkages for the trickle down of trade benefits to poor economies and people, he added.

Dr Suleri informed that in 1964, the UN established the UNCTAD to tackle these issues, and in the 1960s and 1970s even at the beginning of the 1980s, UNCTAD played a dominant role in all negotiations related to trade. G-77 and the erstwhile USSR at that time successfully countered the Western block's stance. However, after the disintegration of the USSR, it started to lose its control and voice in international negotiations. During the last two decades, the role of UNCTAD has been shrunk, as the establishment of the WTO almost outclassed the organisation and shifted the focus from UNCTAD to the WTO, he reasoned. Developed countries brought all trade related issues to the WTO and left only technical assistance with it. Now more or less UNCTAD has become a toothless organisation, he said.

However, an even bigger challenge is how to make sensible use of existing policy space, since the government requires to do their homework to avoid misuse of available policy space. Criticising current economic crises facing Pakistan, **Dr Suleri** was of the opinion that a lack of policy consistency may not be blamed for this situation. Indeed, a set of policies had been implemented during last eight years. It seems that those policies were not right e.g. how government can misuse the policy space, he argued.

Dr Suleri told the audience that market structure and demand are changing rapidly and Transnational Companies (TNCs) are coming to developing countries and LDCs' markets. Further, he added that comparative advantage theory no more persists in international markets and it has been replaced by competitive and customised theory. There is also an emerging concept of consumer preference theory according to which commodities will be produced according to consumer choice and quality requirements. Although TNCs in domestic markets are posing threats for small entrepreneurs and producers, they provide some opportunities as well. For example, developing countries

can use these TNCs as sourcing agent, which will help to improve the livelihoods of millions of people in developing and least developed countries, he pointed out.

Dr Suleri called for enhanced cooperation between civil society and government to make the policies more development-friendly and pro-poor. These initiatives should not be between individuals, but rather among institutions. He suggested to government and civil society to act as complementary bodies rather than opponents, which will help both parties and ultimately the poor sections of society. Trade policy and social policy coherence is a prerequisite to attain the development and poverty reduction objectives. Unfortunately, Pakistan's linkage between trade and social policies is missing, he concluded.

Teepu Sultan opined that changing environment of globalisation is very demanding and we have to work to meet the pace of it, argued at the occasion. He said all developing should try to strengthen the role of UNCTAD.

Dr Ishrat Hussain briefed the participants about the government policies and initiatives to tackle the issue of trade and development in the era of globalisation and said that. Pakistan started liberalisation well before the establishment of the WTO under the structural adjustment programme (SAP) though the process accelerated after the establishment of the WTO. Trade liberalisation induced the growth in Pakistan's economy and growth exhibited impressive rates in present decade. In the last eight years, Pakistan worked hard to complement the international policy framework. Pakistan underwent a comprehensive and rigorous policy change, he added.

Dr Hussain supported the notion that trade has become the most vital instrument of development. In Pakistan, it has been proved that trade has linkages with development and poverty reduction (SPDC, 2005). China's impressive progress got momentum by the introduction of liberalisation of economy. Now, the poverty level in China is very low as compared to what was there three decades ago. China is moving on the same footings and is benefiting from it, he reasoned.

Dr Hussain said that prior to the liberalisation the financial sector of Pakistan was highly protected, regulated and monopolised by state banks. Then, Pakistan started to deregulate the sector and let private sector enter market without any differentiation between domestic and foreign company. The sector showed a boom in investment in the financial sector and a number of domestic and foreigner banks entered the market. This led to competition, which ultimately benefited the consumer. Loans for industrial development and agriculture increased sharply, he argued. Consumption loans were also available which benefited the middle-income groups and entry of new banks and other financial institutes also increased the employment. However, financially the economy could not perform according to the perceived objectives of the government. It also increased the demand for money, which led to increased money supply, he added.

Dr Hussain informed that the telecommunication sector was also deregulated and its process accelerated from 2003 onwards. The sector exhibited impressive growth rates and

its contribution to the GDP increased and consumers were the main beneficiaries of this intervention. However, there are still some loopholes, which require proper attention. Pakistan is on right track to handle these issues. **Dr Hussian** concluded the session with the message that we should come up with some evidence based research and findings. He also urged the organisers to organise seminar based on empirical research.

Dr Abid Q Suleri and **Dr Safdar Sohail** thanked the participants for sparing their valuable time to attend to these important issues.

**“MAINSTREAMING DEVELOPMENT ISSUES
IN PAKISTAN’S TRADE POLICIES”**
**April, 12, 2008, Privatisation Commission of Pakistan Conference Room,
Constitution Avenue Islamabad**
Organised By
Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad
&
Foreign Trade Institute of Pakistan (FTIP)

Inaugural Session:

0900-0930: Introductory Remarks by FTIP & SDPI

Session-I Linkages between Trade and Development in Pakistan

0930-1000: Presentation on “Trade Policy as an instrument of development: Principle Contours of the debate at the national as well as international level” by Dr. Safdar Sohail, Director General, FTIP.

1005-1020: Discussant: Dr. Sajjad Akhtar, Director, Centre for Research on Poverty Reduction & Income.

1020-1035: Discussant: Dr. Sohail Jehangir Malik, Chairman, Innovative Development Strategy (Pvt.) Ltd.

1035-1105: Floor Discussion.

1105-1120: Tea Break.

Session II: UNCTAD XII: Process and Promise

1120-1140: Presentation on “Pakistan’s Perspectives & Positions at UNCTAD XII” by Syed Hassan Javed, Director General, UN, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan.

1140-1200: Presentation on “Pakistan’s Perspectives & Positions at UNCTAD XII” by Syed Irtiqa Ahmed Zaidi, Ministry of Commerce, Government of Pakistan.

1200-1215: Discussant: Dr. Abid Sulehri, Executive Director, SDPI.

1215-1235: Discussant: Mr. Dr. Safdar Sohail, FTIP.

1235-1250: Discussant: Mr. Teepu Sultan, TDAP, Karachi.

1250-1320: Floor Discussion.

1320: Vote of Thanks.

Lunch

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