

TESTIMONIAL

Anders Ahnlid

Director General for Trade
Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Sweden

Making the Goals of Civil Society in Developed World Align with those of the Developing world

My first interaction with CUTS dates back to 1996 and the intensive debate on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, in which I participated, when posted at the Swedish Delegation to the OECD. CUTS stood out, compared to many other NGOs, as an organisation that had done its homework and stood out as a credible participant in the discussion.

The characteristics that make CUTS interesting in my view are its constructive and well-reasoned approaches to analyses of development topics and trade-related issues. The fact that the organisation is based in India and "owned" by developing country representatives is important for giving the views of developing countries a clear voice in the international dialogue on trade-related issues. Its programmes to assist developing country representatives prepare for international trade negotiations are much needed today.

CUTS also takes advocacy initiatives in the area of trade policy that are constructive in nature. One example of this is the Jubilee 2015 market access initiative that was launched in Johannesburg during 2002. In the trade and investment field, CUTS generally improves the ability of the international actors to formulate policy rather than - as some organisations do - denounce the option of multilateral action. The contributions of CUTS as regards trade and competition as well as the IWOGDA programme (International Working Group on the Doha Agenda) are examples of this.

The outreach activities of CUTS and the involvement of researchers and government officials from other developing countries are of great value. Co-operation and alliance-building between developing countries is probably one of the more efficient ways of accelerating the capacity of developing countries to take part in the international dialogue on economic issues as well as preparing for negotiations in organisations such as the WTO. The outcome from the WTO Ministerial in Doha shows that coalition building of that sort can lead to good results. I would welcome an even closer co-operation between CUTS and relevant institutions in the poorer countries in Asia and in Africa.

I would also see a great value in continued attempts to involve civil society (both in developing countries and in developed countries) in an advocacy role in support of trade liberalisation. Such a movement has potentially a major impact on international trade policy and would strengthen the arguments of the more progressive and free trade oriented countries in-for example-the WTO negotiations.

One particular challenge is how to ensure that civil society organisations in developed countries work towards the same goal as the civil society organisations and the poor populations in developing countries. The dialogue with national civil society organisations is instrumental for a country's policy formulation. As regards development issues, it is however, in my view, very important that the demands expressed and the advocacy campaigns launched by the Swedish civil society reflect the real interests of the poor in developing countries.