

CUTS at Hong Kong

The 6th WTO Ministerial Conference was held at Hong Kong, China, during December 13-18, 2005. A large delegation of CUTS, representing the Programme Centres in India and the three overseas Resource Centres, participated in the Ministerial. Besides, 11 network partners were also invited to Hong Kong and formed a part of the CUTS International delegation.

The Secretary General of CUTS International, Pradeep S Mehta, was invited to join the official Indian delegation to the WTO Ministerial.

During the weeklong Ministerial, CUTS organised various events at the sidelines of the WTO Ministerial.

Synergising LDC and Developing Country Priorities

The panel discussion was organised by CUTS Africa Resource Centre, Zambia, on December 13, 2005 in collaboration with civil society partners. The objective of the discussion was to promote cooperation among the developing and least developed countries (LDCs) in the WTO system, by identifying areas of common interests and priorities in the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) negotiations.

Does Trade Lead to Poverty Reduction? Voices from Grassroots Alliances

The event organised on December 15, 2005 was to facilitate cross-fertilisation of experiences and lessons learnt on linkages between trade, development and poverty reduction in developing countries so that appropriate policy responses can be developed. Contrary to the populist belief and perception that trade leads to poverty reduction, this meeting set the record straight, as eminent panelists reached similar conclusions that the linkages between trade and poverty reduction are not yet clear or evident.



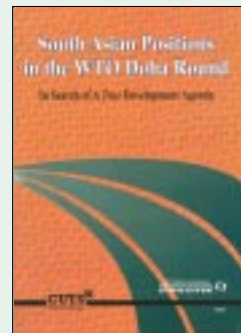
There may be a few examples to prove that the linkages do exist but these are stray cases and do not constitute a decent sample size in order for establishing any substantial generalisation. In this era of globalisation, the role of international trade in poverty reduction cannot be denied and therefore, more research and discussions are required to explore the issue objectively.

A book entitled, 'Globalisation and Livelihood Concerns: People's Perception in Agriculture and Textiles & Clothing (T&C) Sector in Rajasthan and West Bengal, India', was released on the occasion. This book has been published as part of CUTS project: Grassroots Reach out & Networking in India on Trade & Economics (GRANITE).

South-South Cooperation on WTO Issues: Where Do We Stand and How to Move Forward?

This high level session in December 15, 2005 brought together representatives from the government, the private sector and the civil society organisations (CSOs) to explore future prospects and strategies for promoting South-South cooperation. The meeting aimed towards further consolidating South-South alliances on WTO issues to reap maximum benefits out of international trade negotiations.

A book entitled, 'South Asian Positions in the WTO Doha Round: In Search of A True Development Agenda', was released on the occasion. This book is a production under the CUTS project: 'WTO Doha Round & South Asia: Linking Civil Society with Trade Negotiations'.



Representation

CUTS International delegation also participated and attended the events organised by other organisations in Hong Kong. The details of the representations are as under.

- China's Role in the Global Economy: Its Impact on Emerging Economies**
 Pradeep S Mehta was invited to speak at this discussion organised by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) on December 17, 2005. The panel brought together experts from different regions of the world to discuss the experienced as well as the expected impact China has on the economies and labour markets of other advanced developing countries.
- Trade facilitation and development: What will and won't the DDA Accomplish?**
 Pradeep S Mehta was invited to speak at this discussion organised by the World Bank Institute on December 16, 2005. The panel brought together experts from academia, international development agencies, the private sector, and NGO's from different regions of the world to take stock of where the trade facilitation negotiations stand when the Hong Kong Ministerial Meeting is intended to launch the final phase of the DDA negotiations.
- The Marine Seafood Export Supply Chain in India: Current State and Influence of Import Requirements**
 Pranav Kumar presented a paper on at the panel discussion organised by The Trade Knowledge Network (TKN) as part of the Hong Kong Trade and Development Symposium held parallel to the WTO Hong Kong Ministerial. Challenges of market access and compliance under WTO: Case studies from South Asia. The panel presents findings of the research conducted by TKN partners in South Asia (Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Nepal). TKN South Asia activities for the year and the idea of a research mechanism for young researchers will be introduced as well.

Pre-Hong Kong Special Publications

CUTS published a series of papers on the eve of the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference. These included Briefing Papers, Viewpoint Papers and Issue Notes on topics specific to the Ministerial.

BRIEFING PAPERS

Non-Agriculture Market Access –Priority for South Asia

Getting access for the non-agricultural products to the markets of developed countries through the reduction/ elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers (NTBs) is a major issue for the South Asian country's exporters. This Briefing Paper highlights the concerns and interest of these countries under the present negotiations on NAMA, and tries to develop a common negotiating ground to address the same under the present round of negotiations.

South Asian Agenda for Service Negotiation

South Asia, endowed with huge skilled and semi-skilled work force, have a special interest in liberalisation of the economy under mode 4 of the service trade, while the developed countries ask for market access under mode 3. Given this, the Briefing Paper discusses the dynamics of trade in service under WTO with the focus on the South Asian countries, their concerns, issues and interests in the ongoing Doha Round of service trade negotiations.

Development Dimension of Doha Agenda

The present round of WTO negotiations is coined as the 'development round'. However, how far the developmental needs and concerns of the developing countries have been addressed till now is an issue, which lacks accord. Considering this background, the Briefing Paper tries to find out the interests, needs and the special and differential treatments (S&DT) required by the South Asian countries to formulate the negotiating stance under the present round of negotiations.

Agriculture Trade Negotiations After the 'July Package': The Way Forward for South Asia

South Asia's agricultural smallholder producers are up against the developed countries' conglomerates in the ongoing trade negotiations. The talks must be conducted in a transparent manner to attain balance and equity among the differently endowed Members if Doha Round is to be a development

round. This Briefing Paper explores the bargaining terrain in the agriculture negotiations of the Doha Round for the South Asian countries.

Agriculture in the 'July Package': An Assessment of Implications for Least Developed Countries

The outcome of the agricultural negotiations will be critical for the development of LDCs. Because the issues have disproportionate impacts on LDCs it is necessary that the negotiating capital be canalised to form alliances on a case-by-case basis to the relevant groups. This Briefing Paper analyses the implications of the ongoing Doha Round on agriculture for LDCs as a group.

Liberalisation of Environmental Goods and Services Trade, Environment and Development – It's All or Nothing!

This Briefing Paper analyses the Doha trade negotiations regarding environmental goods and services and explored the difficulties of WTO Members to reach an agreement on the identification of environmental goods and services (EGS) and the approach to be taken for their trade liberalisation.

Technical Assistance & Capacity Building: Can WTO Serve Developing Countries?

The Doha Ministerial Declaration dedicated more text to the capacity building (CB) than to any other issue. Whether these CB commitments are appropriately tailored towards serving developing country's interests, however, remains a challenge'. The various issues related to CB have been discussed in this Briefing Paper.

The Doha Development Agenda: Revisiting the Development Dimension

This Briefing Paper reviews what the development dimension of the Doha Round really means and what progress has been made in this area so far.

VIEWPOINT PAPERS

Trade and Environment

The Viewpoint Paper concludes that 'without proper consensus on which EGS are to be classified for liberalisation, members continue to be stuck at square one'.

WTO Rules

The Viewpoint Paper outlines the 'grave issues surrounding the escalation in protective practices via Anti-dumping (AD), Countervailing & Subsidies measures caused Members to

initiate effective discussion on such matters within the Doha Declaration'.

TRIPs and Biodiversity

The Viewpoint Paper explains that considering the wide disagreement between the US and developing countries, it is understandable that the Hong Kong (Draft) Ministerial text offers little'.



ISSUE PAPERS

The Challenges of Effective Participation in the WTO: The Case of a Least Developed Country

Sierra Leone, an LDC in global multilateral trade regime, has taken a significant step by fielding a stronger delegation in the 2005 WTO Ministerial. From the medium to long-term, there is has been substantial technical assistance offered from a range of donors to improve Sierra Leone's understanding of WTO specific issues. The Issue Paper discusses the challenges faced by Sierra Leone *vis-à-vis* WTO issues.

Special & Differential Treatment for Developing Countries in the Doha Round

This Issue Paper pronounces that Doha Round will not be successfully concluded unless the question of S&DT is confronted and addressed in a way that would give some security for the countries, which were benefited from it in the past and which create a legally and developmentally sound system for the future.

GATS, Infrastructure & Regulation

The progress in the GATS negotiations during the Doha Round has been disappointing. This Issue Paper explains the

facilitating role that infrastructure development can play for promoting the balanced socio-economic needs for the developing nations through effective domestic regulations and policy-making decisions under the GATS provisions.

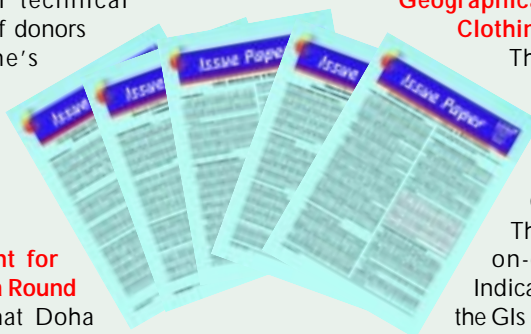
Geographical Indications – A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing

The EU's claim for GIs to be included within trade negotiations at the international platform is found to be weak. Alternatively, EU must reform its anti-competitive practices regarding GIs.

This Issue Paper draws attention to the on-going debate on geographical Indications (GIs) at the WTO and explored the GIs negotiations, primarily involving the EU.

External Financing for Poor Nations – Greater Commitments Needed from the North

The LDCs definitely need a greater degree of cooperation from their rich counterparts in the North. The Issue Paper emphasises the need for the North to step up its efforts in providing external financing to the poor nations in terms of: debt relief, official development assistance and foreign direct investment (FDI).



Post-Hong Kong

PUBLICATIONS

Compendium on the Hong Kong Ministerial

After the Cancún Ministerial of the WTO, CUTS International published a collection of articles, widely covered in the media the world over before, during and after the Ministerial. The compendium was titled, 'We've been here before'. Many of you readers received and appreciated its value as an excellent reference document. This book compiled the various points and views expressed by renowned experts and commentators on WTO issues. It helped trade negotiators, trade policy officials and the trade community at large, and to those who have been doing research and advocacy on WTO.

Once again, CUTS International plans a similar publication on the Hong Kong Ministerial. This way, CUTS International will contribute a reference document for successful conclusion of the Doha Round of negotiations. Your contribution to this endeavour is intended to be kept as minimal, to cover the cost of the publication and its postage price. And for this, the contribution (including postage) of US\$20 (for overseas, US\$10 for third world nations) and Rs 300 (for Indian) will be highly appreciated.

We request you to send us a line confirming your interest in receiving a copy of this book and contributing towards covering its publication and postage costs. Please mail at cuts@cuts.org or citee@cuts.org to reserve your copy.

EVENTS

CUTS and RIPA (Rajasthan State Institute of Public Administration) organised a lecture by G. K Pillai, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India on Sixth WTO Ministerial Conference held at the Hong Kong and what it means for the states in India, at Jaipur on Monday 2nd January 2006.

CUTS organised a meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday 21st December 2006, where a group of parliamentarians cutting across different political parties assembled under the banner of the "Parliamentarians Forum on Economic Policy Issues (PAR-FORE)" to discuss the success of Hong Kong Ministerial.



L-R: M V Rajasekharan, Yashwant Sinha, P C Alexander and Pradeep S Mehta

BRIEFING PAPER

**WTO in 2006: Looking Back to Move Ahead
Post-Hong Kong is More Challenging**

The Declaration of the 6th WTO Ministerial, which took place in Hong Kong in December 2005, has been meticulously analysed in this Briefing Paper. The reactions and stands of the various players at Hong Kong have been discussed at length. The Briefing Paper contains a comparison table, which maps the positions on selected major issues under three categories: in July Package, in Hong Kong; and after Hong Kong in order to attain a successful conclusion of the Doha round.

Events

Final Consultation on South-South Economic Cooperation: Exploring Mekong-Ganga Relationship

Bangkok, Thailand, October 26-27, 2005

CUTS organised the Final Consultation of the Project 'South-South Economic Cooperation: Exploring Mekong-Ganga Relationship', at Bangkok, Thailand, on October 26-27, 2005. The meeting brought together business bodies, policy makers, media, research institutions, CSOs and representatives of international and intergovernmental organisations to discuss the findings of the project and deliberate on the issues for better economic cooperation between India and GMS countries.

Joint National Seminar- Granite & TDP

Jaipur, India, November 13-15, 2005

A joint National Seminar was organised for the inter-related projects, Grassroots Reach out & Networking in India on Trade & Economics (GRANITE) and Exploring Linkages between Trade, Development and Poverty Reduction (TDP), in Jaipur during November 13-15, 2005. The objective of the seminar was to create a better space for the Indian civil society for effective interventions at various levels and to facilitate cross-fertilisation of experiences and lessons learnt during implementation of the project.



It was found that the economic reforms have swept the entire world, and changes have been bi-directional – integrating domestic economy into world economy and liberalisation of the domestic economy. Some areas pointed out, where reforms are needed, viz. fiscal policies and public investment in agriculture, the domestic market, which is still strangulated by unnecessary rules and regulation, and in the supportive sectors (credit, marketing and extension).

MEDIA CORNER

SAARC countries can gain through mutually beneficial plans: Altaf

United News of Bangladesh, November 22, 2005

Commerce Minister of Bangladesh Altaf Hossain Choudhury highlighted the success of the 13th summit of the seven-member regional body held in Dhaka and expressed the hope that under the umbrella of SAARC all member countries could reap the benefits equitably by implementing the mutually beneficial action plans.

More on: <http://www.cuts-international.org/cutsinmedia2005.htm#saarc22nov05>

India's liberalisation policy may weaken position at WTO: Sinha

ZEE News, December 22, 2005

Former External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha at a discussion under the banner of the Parliamentarians Forum on Economic Policy Issues (PAR-FORE) said that India's policy of opening up the economy on its own and without any pressure from other countries may weaken its negotiating position at the WTO.

More on: <http://www.cuts-international.org/cutsinmedia2005.htm#india22dec05>

WTO TRTA Inception Workshop

Geneva, November 23, 2005

The Inception workshop for the Strategic Review of WTO's Trade Related Technical Assistance Activities was organised in Geneva on November 23, 2005. In the Inception Workshop, implementation and methodology were discussed and finalised attended by the project partners, including Latin American School of Social Sciences (FLACSO, Argentina), Canada-based North-South Institute and members of the project's Steering Committee.

TDP Linkages meeting

Geneva, November 24, 2005



An International Symposium under the TDP project was jointly organised by CUTS International and UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service in Geneva on November 24, 2005. The Symposium was organised to facilitate cross-fertilisation of experiences and lessons learnt on linkages between trade, development and poverty reduction in developing countries for devising appropriate policy responses.

Participants included representatives from a number of European development ministries, developing country WTO missions, UNCTAD, UNDP, World Bank, and a wide range of academic and CSOs from across Africa, Asia and Europe, where the project is being implemented.

The diverse participation resulted in lively discussions and enabled the participants to identify the gaps, learning from each other and discussing ways to improve the process and outcomes of such initiatives. Two studies, one each from Africa and Asia, covering stakeholder perceptions on trade, development and poverty initiatives were discussed.

Future Events

Linkages between Trade, Development and Poverty Reduction 'Netherlands Trade Policy: Searching for a development perspective'

CUTS-LRC, in association with Both ENDS of Netherlands, is organising the national dialogue as part of Linkages between Trade, Development and Poverty Reduction project in the Hague, Switzerland on February 23, 2006. The event will bring together a wide range of governmental and non-governmental bodies to discuss ways to improve coherent relations between trade and development policy in Netherlands.

National Consultation on Regional Economic Cooperation in South Asia

CUTS-CITEE, in association with FES, India and Indian Merchants' Chamber (IMC), will organise a National Consultation of the project entitled, 'Regional Economic Cooperation in South Asia' at Mumbai, India on March 24, 2006. This consultation is among the series of meetings in various South Asian countries with an effort to gather together country perspectives on the obstacles faced by the region as a whole in enhancing the economic cooperation and in strengthening the growth process. The consultation will deliberate on themes, such as South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), FDI, Trade Facilitation Measures and Business-to-Business (B2B) Engagements etc.