



CUTS-FICCI Conference on
Global Partnership for Development
Where do we stand and where to go?

August 12-13, 2008, New Delhi, India

An Analysis of the Feedback of Participants

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Introduction

CUTS International and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry, in association with the Department of Commerce, Government of India; Commonwealth Secretariat and the India office of the World Bank, jointly organised the Global Partnership for Development Conference in New Delhi, India on August 12-13, 2008.

It was organised with the support of the Government of India; Commonwealth Secretariat; Commonwealth Foundation; World Bank; UK's Department for International Development; the French Development Agency (AFD); Government of the Netherlands; International Development Research Centre of Canada; Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Germany; and the Government of Norway.

The Conference was conceived a year ago against the backdrop of the slow progress in the Doha Round of negotiation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The Doha Round was dubbed as a Development Round even though even a completely successful Doha Round cannot possibly solve the serious developmental problems in most of the poor countries. As international trade is still recognised as an important vehicle for fostering economic growth, lack of supply side capacity along with market access barriers have reduced the developmental opportunities for a large number of poor and vulnerable countries, thus threatening the achievement of their developmental goals.

The reality is that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which stress the importance of a global partnership for development, remain largely rhetorical. There is no firm and concrete commitment by the high-income countries to reform their trade regimes, to provide effective opportunities and take concomitant measures to assist poor countries in their fight against poverty. The conference was meant to take stock of the progress made in achieving the MDGs, especially MDG-8 (Global Partnership for Development).

The participants discussed the current state of play with regard to the Doha Round of negotiations by the WTO Members and other important issues which need to be addressed to achieve a real and meaningful global partnership for development. The Inaugural Session was addressed by several dignitaries including Kamal Nath, Commerce & Industry Minister of India; Pascal Lamy, Director General of the World Trade Organisation; Supachai Panitchpakdi, Secretary General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; Ransford Smith, Deputy Secretary General of the Commonwealth Secretariat; Rajan Bharti Mittal, Vice President of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry; Pradeep S. Mehta, Secretary General of CUTS International; and Amit Mitra, Secretary General of FICCI.

Based on the feedback received from the participants the event was successful in terms of quality of the presentations, discussions, resource materials, networking opportunities and administrative and logistical arrangements.

Objectives

The specific objectives were to:

- assess the impact of the increasing delay at the Doha Round of negotiations on LDCs (least developed countries) and SVEs (small and vulnerable economies) and the prospects for achieving their enhanced and beneficial participation in world trade;
- discuss the scope for cooperation between developed and developing (including least developed) countries over and above multilateral trade talks and regional trading arrangements, including supply-side reforms, to strengthen the link between trade, growth and poverty reduction in the world;
- identify the scope and means for ensuring fuller and more effective participation by the developed and the more advanced developing countries in the advancement of growth and development in the rest of the world, and
- based on the above, to formulate concrete recommendations for making the global partnership for development more effective.

Content

To assist future discourse on the global trade and development cooperation regime, a number of thought provoking ideas were discussed in the following sessions :

- Global Partnership for Development: Where do we stand?
- LDCs and SVEs in the International Trading System: What future for them?
- Operationalising Aid for Trade: Who is (should) doing (do) what?
- UK's Aid for Trade Strategy: Lessons for future effective international trade and development architecture
- Services Liberalisation and Domestic Regulation: Why it is so important?
- Roundtable on Mainstreaming Development in the WTO
- Trilateral Development Cooperation: How to make it more effective?
- The Future of the Global Trading System
- Global Partnership for Development: Where to go?

Participants

More than 500 participants, including about 120 international delegates attended the event. Presentations were made by several eminent speakers including experts, practitioners and academicians in the field of international trade and development. They include:

- G. K. Pillai, Secretary, Department of Commerce, Government of India
- Jayant Dasgupta, Joint Secretary, Department of Commerce, Government of India
- T. N. Srinivasan, Professor of Economics, Yale University, USA
- Edwin Laurent, Adviser & Head, International Trade and Regional Co-operation Section, Economic Affairs Division, Commonwealth Secretariat
- Lakshmi Puri, Acting Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD
- Nitin Desai, Former Under Secretary-General of the United Nations
- Lars-Olof Lindgren, Ambassador of Sweden to India
- Claire Durkin, Director, Europe, International Trade and Development, DFID, UK
- Roger Nellist, Acting Head, Growth & Investment Group, DFID, UK
- Rachid Benmessaoud, Acting Country Director, The World Bank, India
- Debapriya Bhattacharya, Ambassador of Bangladesh to the WTO
- L. Alan Winters, Professor of Economics, University of Sussex, UK

- Jean-Raphael Chaponniere, Chief Economist, Asia Region, AFD, France
- Richard Carey, Director, Development Cooperation Directorate, OECD Secretariat
- Mustafizur Rahman, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh
- James S. Kuleiye, Principal Customs & Trade Officer, East African Community Secretariat, Arusha
- Shishir Priyadarshi, Director, Development Division, World Trade Organisation
- Chris Milner, Professor of Economics, University of Nottingham, UK
- Miguel Rodriguez-Mendoza, Senior Fellow, ICTSD, Geneva
- Per Botolf Maurseth, Senior Researcher, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
- Rajesh Aggarwal, Senior Advisor, International Trade Centre, Geneva
- Ramesh Chaitoo, Head, Services Trade Unit, Caribbean Regional Negotiating Machinery
- B. K. Zutshi, Former Indian Ambassador to the GATT
- R. S. Khemani, Principal, MiCRA (Microeconomics Consulting & Research Associates) Inc, Washington DC
- Dominique Njinkeu, Executive Director, International Lawyers and Economists Against Poverty
- Peter Kiuluku, Executive Director, Trade Policy Training Centre in Africa
- Richard Higgott, Pro Vice-Chancellor, University of Warwick, UK
- M. Supperamiam, Advisor, Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers
- Stephen Lande, President, Manchester Trade

Evaluation

The feedback form asked two types of questions: open ended and closed. Responses on open-ended questions are analysed as highlights, limitations and recommendations. This evaluation is based on 83 responses received from participants (approximately 120) present at all sessions. This was not only important for evaluation of this event but also for planning similar and related initiatives in future. Participants acknowledged the importance of the event and the rich discussion that had taken place. The key messages are as follows:

- The world trading system is becoming increasingly complex with time and it needs to be simplified. This is very important, as it would help in increasing the participation of the developing countries in the WTO.
- There is a need to promote the flow of information and lower transaction costs in order to increase trade flows between countries.
- There is need to go beyond the multilateral trading system to pay attention to regional trading systems and to analyse to what extent they are consistent with the multilateral rule based system;
- The Doha agenda needs to be completed, but the conditionalities that are going to be imposed on the developing countries, should to be just and right;
- The aid for trade mechanism needs to be properly structured; its boundaries need to be clear and it should not contain conditionalities;
- All the member countries are committed to achieving the objectives of the MDG. However, there are new issues that are emerging such as climate change, food and oil crises. There is a need to analyse these emerging issues in the light of the emerging and evolving international trading system.

The following are some of the highlights:

- Strong presence of some key representatives of the international trade and development community, which facilitated discussion of various thought provoking issues;
- Participation of a diverse group of stakeholders such as ministers, ambassadors and high commissioners of several countries, parliamentarians, WTO officials, representatives from UNCTAD and other inter-governmental organisations, business associations, non-governmental organisations, donors, academics, media, etc;
- High quality of speeches, presentations and papers, and interactive nature of discussions; and
- Huge networking opportunity.

Some limitations are as follows:

- A majority of the participants felt that more time should have been allotted for discussions;
- There could have been more discussion on some current issues like food and energy crises and their linkages with international trade; and
- Limited participation of stakeholders from South America.

Some major recommendations can be summarised as:

- Need to have participation by industry, private sector, small producers, farmer groups, students;
- There should be parallel sessions to allow more scope for discussions in similar events in the future – such sessions can focus on the success stories/challenges encountered by developing countries while participating in the international trading system; and
- Information on the evolving global trade agenda, particularly on aid for trade issues, should be circulated widely to the international trade and development community at large – many of them, for example, appreciated the CUTS Weekly Bulletin on Trade and Development.

Responses on closed questions are analysed by deriving an average score. Figure 1 represents average scores on overall management.

Figure 1: Overall Management of the Conference

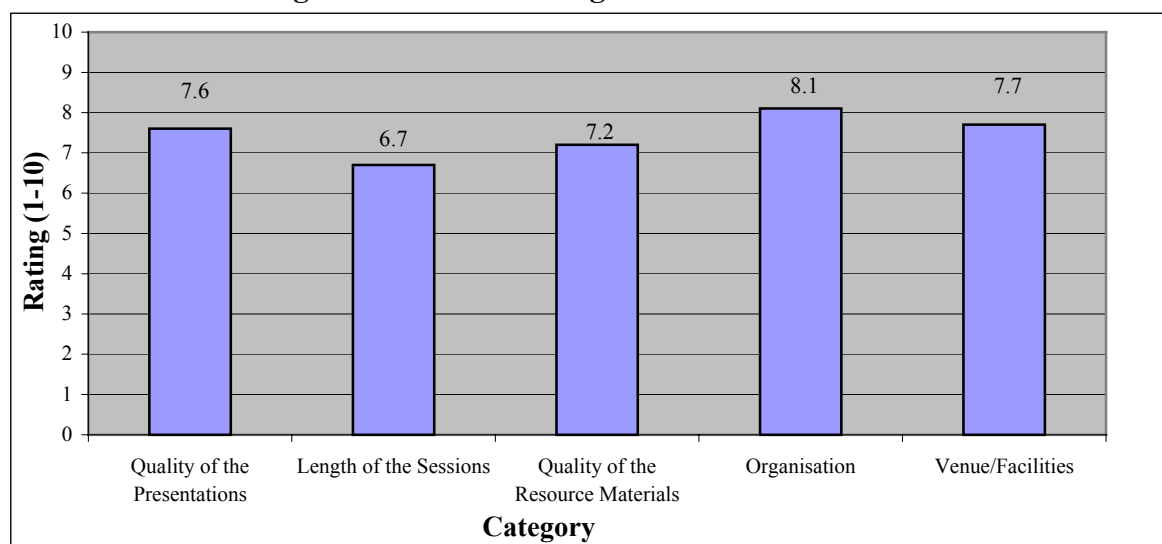


Figure 2 represents average scores for different sessions.

Figure 2: Average Scores for Different Sessions

