

**CUTS-FICCI Conference on
Global Partnership for Development**
Where do we stand and where to go?
New Delhi, August 12-13, 2008

Key Message

Multilateralism will Reinvent Itself in a More Resolute Avatar

Clouds of doubt and despondency loomed over the future of multilateralism at the beginning of the Conference with the mini-ministerial talks hosted by the WTO at Geneva flopping. The deliberations at the Conference, however, blew away these clouds and blazed a new and bright trail for multilateralism to chart in the near future.

The need for a just and equitable framework for trading relations was recognised as an imperative under the Millennium Development Goal-8, and its creation through the development of the following features was recommended:

- donors living up to their commitments for provision of additional and unconditional aid;
- countries themselves structuring their domestic and international policies to be mutually compatible and in sync with international trading rules;
- minimisation of privately installed non-tariff barriers;
- dismantlement of regulatory barriers to trade in services which nullify productivity increases or block market access;
- simple, well defined, easily interpretable and broad-based trading rules which encourage wider participation across countries in trade with possible gains for the weakest members of the WTO; and
- inter-governmental organisations to work coherently to achieve the above features.

The mentioned measures would serve as a crucial step towards mainstreaming trade into development and vice-versa. However, it has to be accompanied by 'aid for trade' which could be utilised strategically to meet the adjustment costs associated with a transfer to more open regimes. More importantly, to buttress the supply side that prevents least developed countries (LDCs) and small and vulnerable economies (SVEs) from becoming effective exporters. Such aid, it was felt, needs to be dispensed on the basis of the declared needs of potential beneficiaries and a rigorous and transparent appraisal mechanism. Furthermore, aid coherence is very critical and the Paris Declaration must be followed in letter and spirit.

These and other capacity development programmes for the benefit of LDCs and SVEs, it was recommended, should take into account the specific characteristics of each country or at least those of groups of similar countries.

As the deliberations of the Conference unfolded all fears about multilateralism or even the Doha Round dying an untimely death were totally dispelled. This was evident in the spirited speeches and interventions of delegates and an expression of their resolve to support multilateralism as a medium for honing international trading relations. It gradually became clear that the 'flop' was but another 'bump' on the road which would not mark the demise of multilateralism but its resurrection in a new, better suited and more resolute avatar.

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Agenda>>