
Trade and Development in a New Era: Existential Questions and Alternative Options

Time: 8 - 9.30 am, Place: CR-7, UNHQ, New York, Date: April 25, 2018

*Organised by the CS FfD Group (including the Women's WG on FfD)
Facilitating organizations: SID, TWN and OWINFS*

The recent years have seen some major game changers in international trade policymaking. While for some time trade policy-making has become more complex and aggressive with the bilateral or plurilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) that attempt to bypass the impasse at the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the recent period marks a more tectonic shift.

There is shift in the rhetoric on globalization with the major countries or political segments therein that pushed globalization on developing countries earlier now turning against it. At the same time, trade-for-development has been a major casualty with the Doha Development Round (DDR) of the WTO being under threat with implications for Special and Differential Treatment for developing and least developed countries. On the other hand, several 'new issues' such as e-commerce, investment facilitation and others, which were not part of DDR and are seen by most developing countries as not in their interest, are being forwarded for rulemaking in the WTO.

Interestingly, this paradigm shift also converges with the 2015 mandate of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda stemming from the Financing for Development process, both of which puts trade policy as key to achieving sustainable development, especially in the developing South. While both frameworks highlight the enabling role of a fair, transparent and nondiscriminatory trading system, it is clear that the absence of such trade rules would pose systemic barriers to the achievement of sustainable development and will leave many behind. The frameworks talk of specific trade instruments or principles, including the conclusion of the Doha Development Round, but the need for an even more comprehensive development oriented enabling trade policy is clear if one takes an analytical look at the implementation needs of the 17 SDGs.

The proposed workshop aims to examine the current trends and shifts in approach to trade policy in the context of these two apparently opposing dynamics and will examine the following issues:

- *Explore the key implications for and links with the 2030 Agenda and FfD follow-up process;*
- *Assess where development-oriented trade policymaking stands with threat to Doha, S&D and the push for new issues;*
- *Explore institutional issues and alternatives to ensure trade for development keeping in mind the SDG needs*