

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

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**Wednesday, April 25, 8:00-09:30 – UN HQ Conference Room 7**

### **Organized by:**

Civil Society FfD Group (including the Women's Working Group on FfD)

### **Facilitating Organizations:**

Third World Network (TWN), Our World is not for Sale (OWINS), Society for International Development (SID)

### **Short summary**

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 bilateral or plurilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) that attempt to bypass the impasse at the World Trade Organization (WTO), the recent period marks a more tectonic shift. The side event will therefore aim to:

- Analyse current trends and shifts in approach to trade policy;
- Explore the key implication for 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 arrangements to ensure trade for development.

The format of the side event will be highly interactive. After a framing presentation, the moderator will facilitate active dialogue with a small panel of respondents and the audience.

### **Rationale**

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.

The first of these is the 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. This has also come alongside a shift in paradigm in the major institutions and spaces of trade policy making; and more overtly in the WTO. Apart from the logjam created in the institutional arrangements itself, trade-for-development has been the major casualty. The Doha Development Round of the WTO has been under attack for some time, an effort that culminated in the Nairobi Ministerial of 2015 but without a clear outcome. Special and Differential treatment for developing and least developed countries, an underpinning mandate of Doha, is no longer a given and has to be fought for and traded against.

With this came the push for rule-making under the 'New Issues' such as ecommerce & investment facilitation among others. These were not in the Doha mandate and are not seen by most developing countries as enablers of their development policy but are now increasingly promoted by a number of developed countries, with a few developing ones.

In contradiction, 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 opposite would pose systemic barriers to the achievement of sustainable development. 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 a analytical look through all the 17 SDGs.

The proposed workshop aims to examine the current discourse in trade for development in the context of these two apparently opposing dynamics and will attempt to examine the following questions:

- What do the current shift away from the pursuit of globalization and the specific application of this approach mean for developing countries?
- How do some of the current trade rules imply for the SDGs and are the MOI and the Addis Instruments enough to ensure the implementation of the SDGs?
- What does the attempt to eliminate development-oriented trade policymaking which was a key underpinning principle in major trade negotiations including in the Doha Round, along with the push for new issues, imply for the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Agenda?
- How should existing institutions be reformed to address the challenge to development from the emerging approaches to trade or has the time come to re-locate the trade and development discourse in a new space and institution?

A detailed programme of the event is being finalized and will be provided as soon as possible. However, the format of the side event will be highly interactive. After a framing presentation, the moderator will facilitate active dialogue with a small panel of respondents and the audience.