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RECENT AND UPCOMING EVENTS

Civil Society Forum at UNCTAD XI in São Paulo

The Civil Society Forum, whose plenary session was held at the Anhembi Convention Centre on 11 and 12 June 2004, two days before the beginning of UNCTAD XI, was included in the official programme of UNCTAD XI events. The Forum, co-organized by ABONG (Brazilian Association of Non-Governmental Organizations), REBRIP (Brazilian Network for the Integration of Peoples) and a group of international NGOs, and working closely with the UNCTAD secretariat to coordinate its activities with those of the Conference, continued throughout UNCTAD XI. About 300 NGOs, private-sector bodies and academic institutions, accredited to UNCTAD XI or in status with UNCTAD, participated in the Forum. UNCTAD XI provided civil society representatives from different regions with an opportunity to hold a dialogue on the main issues, in line with the theme and subthemes of the Conference, and to contribute to the discussion on trade and development issues.

Round tables, presentations, dialogues and debates tackled a broad range of issues related to the impact of trade on development and social trends. Civil society organizations were invited to share their views on these issues with panellists from governmental bodies and officials from international agencies.

The participants discussed issues related to the international economic system and global free trade. The link between trade and human rights protection was debated. Participants examined the impacts of agricultural liberalization and the promotion of food security within the context of sustainable development. They stressed the benefits of fair trade practices with regard to ensuring more sustainable development and protecting small producers. They also exchanged proposals and ideas on the role of civil society organizations in the context of global governance, notably from the point of view of international organizations, including the United Nations.

Civil Society Forum press conference

A press conference organized by key civil society actors was held on 18 June to take stock of the results of the Forum. Participants emphasized that the Forum provided a means of discussing the São Paulo Consensus document. This text called - for the first time ever - for policy space to be secured in developing countries. Participants also identified the main issues at stake for civil society, such as the protection of small farmers, the impact of fair trade on development, commodity prices and corporate accountability.

Participants pointed out that debates involving farmers' organizations, consumer groups and environmental groups from the North and the South represented an essential aspect of the Forum. Discussions focused in particular on the position of transnational corporations in agricultural trade and on the various aspects of food security. Participants regarded the creation of a Task Force on Commodities as a positive outcome of UNCTAD XI.

They acknowledged that much had been done in the UN context on various aspects of gender, including the planned establishment of a Gender Task Force. They regretted that the way in which UNCTAD dealt with the issue of gender did not yet adequately reflect their firmly held belief that women should be regarded as actors in development and trade policies, and not just as objects of policies, for example as recipients of benefits. The high social costs that women have paid in the past should be taken into account.

The civil society actors repeated their positions with regard to their expectations from UNCTAD's future leadership: it should reaffirm the organization's original mandate and be committed to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Also, UNCTAD should affirm its role in research activities and work effectively with other bodies in the United Nations system.

It was noted that civil society was still very far from having a voice in global institutions. Even though relations between government and civil society in some countries had undergone a positive change, civil society actors were usually excluded from decision-making processes. Even at UNCTAD XI, civil society had not been able to enter into the heart of the debate.

Contribution of civil society to UNCTAD XI

Adoption and presentation of the Civil Society Declaration

Civil society organizations adopted a final declaration during the plenary session of the Forum on 12 June. It was presented to the plenary session of the Committee of the Whole on Monday, 14 June, by Ms. Antonia Mello of the Brazilian Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (ABONG).

Ms. Iara Pietricovsky (REBRIP) and Mr. José Bové (Via Campesina) also gave a copy of the document to the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, when he addressed the Forum.

The Civil Society Declaration highlights the views of NGOs, private-sector bodies and academic institutions regarding the globalization process and development in relation to international trade flows. It underlines the shortcomings and weaknesses of the declarations adopted by member States. In addition, it proposes an alternative vision of the role to be played by UNCTAD in its commitment to meeting the requirements of sustainable development, social inclusion and gender equality: the organization has to promote the development policies of the countries of the South for a more equitable approach which will benefit all people and help protect the environment.

The Civil Society Forum also made several proposals for enhancing the global trading system. With regard to global governance, it stated that the international economic order must not be built on the basis of the Washington Consensus, but must address the needs of every nation and every people. Civil society representatives also expressed their concern about the impact of the decrease in the number of development policy options as a result of the present international economic structure and trade obligations imposed on developing countries. Alternative and more sustainable strategies are required, in line with the specific national contexts of each country. As one of the main factors for growth, the commodity sector in developing countries must not be ignored by the international development agenda. UNCTAD was urged to become involved in the more effective regulation of commodity markets, including the market for agricultural products. Civil society organizations reaffirmed their support for UNCTAD's activities in the areas of research, analysis and policy formulation. Finally, the Forum expressed its desire to be more closely associated with UNCTAD and to be consulted on decisions concerning the organization's future management.

For more information, please consult the Civil Society Forum Declaration:

http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/itd407_en.pdf

Contributions and statements by civil society to ministerial meetings

Civil society organizations also had the opportunity to exchange views with representatives of UNCTAD member States and made contributions to the interactive thematic sessions held during the Conference.

These sessions addressed the specific issues of Trade and Poverty and Development Strategies (Monday, 14 June), Building Productive Capacity (Tuesday, 15 June), Assuring Development Gains (Wednesday, 16 June) and Partnership for Development: Information and Knowledge for Development (Thursday, 17 June).

Civil society organizations were also invited to contribute to the General Debate (broadcast live on the Web). The representative of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP), on behalf of the Fair Trade Movement and its allies, presented the Fair Trade Declaration during the General Debate.

Official statements to the Civil Society Forum

Statement by the UN Secretary-General (13 June)

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, addressed the Civil Society Forum on 13 June. He expressed concern about the impact, in the developing world, of agricultural and non-agricultural subsidies granted in developed countries, which create unfair international competition, and about the issue of market access for developing economies. Civil society and the United Nations, he stressed, have similar goals in the fight against poverty. The alleviation of poverty required a comprehensive approach, one that included environmental concerns and conflicts.

While acknowledging that the Millennium Development Goals were not utopian, he said that they would be achievable if there was adequate political will. Urgent action was needed, however. To that end, it was necessary to mobilize national and local support in order to influence the political will of Governments. UNCTAD XI should be a call for action in this regard.

The Secretary-General underscored the growing role of civil society actors in the framework of major United Nations events, and reiterated his personal commitment to developing procedures involving non-State partners in the United Nations. The United Nations was, he said, open to all civil society stakeholders.

Finally, Mr. Annan called on NGOs and other civil society representatives attending the Forum to maintain pressure on their Governments so that they kept their promise to commit themselves to reducing poverty and meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

After making his statement, Mr. Annan answered questions from NGO representatives.

Statement by the UNCTAD Secretary-General (11 June)

The Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Mr. Rubens Ricupero, addressed the Civil Society Forum on 11 June. Civil society was, in his opinion, "UNCTAD's natural ally", acting as a "critical consciousness in global processes". He believed that both UNCTAD and civil society provided a healthy diversity of opinion and a critical vision on international trade and development issues. Moreover, he emphasized the growing importance of civil society's role with regard to UNCTAD in the changes that were taking place and the debate on the world economic priorities. Indeed, NGOs were active in including social concerns and values in the world trade debate, such as gender issues, the fight against poverty and environmental impacts. Civil society actors thus had a significant influence in moving the international trade agenda towards the issue of moral values.

Since becoming Secretary-General, Mr. Ricupero had tried to give civil society a stronger voice, but many States had rejected that approach. He said that it was necessary to link civil society organizations to political representation in the field of international trade negotiations.

Turning to the field of international economic policies, he defended the implementation of cautious financial liberalization. He did not advocate a one-size-fits-all approach, and said that each country should have its own rules to guard against the inflow of risky capital.

Mr. Ricupero also addressed the Fair Trade reception organized by civil society actors on 17 June.

President da Silva's visit to the Civil Society Forum (15 June)

The President of Brazil, Mr. Luiz Ignacio da Silva, addressed the Forum on 15 June and explained his international trade and development policies. The fight against hunger and poverty remained the main objective of his international diplomacy, and he appealed to civil society to call on each Government to take action against hunger, and to continue to bring this issue into the political debate.

President da Silva commented on the growing role of civil society actors in applying pressure to States. The involvement of civil society was important in the mobilization to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, which were, he said, closely linked with global trade issues.

Parliamentary meeting of the IPU

A Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of UNCTAD XI, organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, was held at the Palatino Building in São Paulo from 11 to 12 June. Collaboration and exchanges of views and information with parliamentarians are an important aspect of UNCTAD's relations with non-State actors.

Parliamentarians from 45 countries adopted by consensus a declaration that addressed the themes of UNCTAD XI. For further information, please consult the Declaration of the Parliamentary Meeting: http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/TD406_en.pdf

The Inter-Parliamentary Union also organized an interactive discussion entitled "The South in search of new solutions" on 11 June. The meeting brought together parliamentarians, government representatives and international experts to assess the impacts of the most recent economic events on the long-term development strategies of the South.

Forthcoming hearing with civil society and the private sector

The São Paulo Consensus provided that the Trade and Development Board will arrange for half-day informal hearings with non-State actors to allow the latter to express their views on the issues before the Board (para. 117). This arrangement will be based on the procedure applied during the preparatory process of the Conference. For more information regarding the civil society hearings during the preparatory process for UNCTAD XI, please consult the previous issues of the CSO Newsletter.

A half-day civil society hearing will take place in Geneva on Monday, 4 October 2004, during the session of the Trade and Development Board. Civil society representatives will discuss the items on the Board's agenda.

Further information on that hearing, including the accreditation process and the issues to be discussed, will be made available on the UNCTAD website.

Outcome of UNCTAD XI and civil society participation

The São Paulo Consensus strengthens relations between UNCTAD and civil society organizations. It states that "UNCTAD should make the participation of civil society, in particular NGOs and academic circles, the private sector and other organizations of the UN system more systematic and better integrated with intergovernmental processes".

For more information, please consult the Spirit of São Paulo (www.unctad.org/en/docs/tld1382_en.pdf) and the São Paulo Consensus (www.unctad.org/en/docs/tld410_en.pdf), both available on the UNCTAD website.

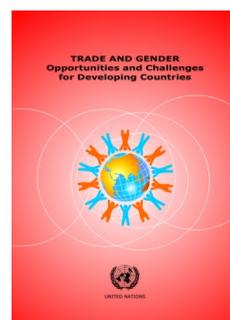
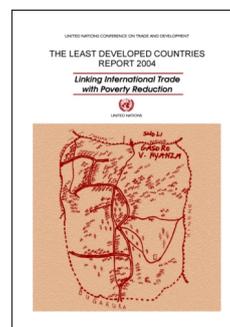
NEW PUBLICATIONS

The Least Developed Countries Report 2004

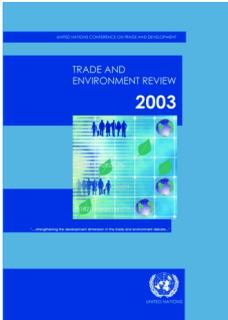
The Least Developed Countries 2004 Report assesses the relationship between international trade and poverty in the LDCs, and identifies national and international policies that can make trade a more effective mechanism for poverty reduction in those countries. It argues that international trade can play a major positive role in reducing poverty in LDCs but that in many of them, on the contrary, it has a negative impact. In some this is due to a weak trade performance. The failure of trade expansion to reduce poverty has been related to weaker linkages between trade and economic growth than in the more advanced developing countries. The Report shows that deep trade liberalization in the 1990s and preferential market access did not necessarily alleviate poverty. A more effective link between international trade and poverty reduction could help to prevent this from happening.

Trade and Gender: Opportunities and Challenges for Developing Countries

Questions arise as to how the costs and benefits of trade can be evenly distributed by gender, and whether trade rules and policies deepen or, on the contrary, reduce existing gender inequalities. There is therefore a need to assess the impact of trade on gender equality in order to assist countries in designing appropriate strategies and policies to support the objective of gender equality in the context of an open multilateral trading system. It was with the dual objectives of deepening the understanding of the gender dimension of trade and identifying policy challenges and responses to meet the goal of gender equality that, in February 2003, the UN



Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality created a Task Force on Gender and Trade, of which UNCTAD was designated task manager. The Task Force comprises UN agencies and regional commissions, the World Bank, WTO, OECD and the Commonwealth Secretariat. Some of the findings of the analyses undertaken by UNCTAD, FAO, UNIDO, OHCHR, ITC and UNIFEM are published in this book.

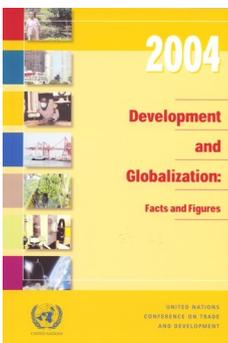


Trade and Environment Review, 2003

Growing recognition has been given to the need to integrate environmental and social aspects into development strategies. Developing countries, however, are afraid that the subject of trade and environment is being driven by developed country Governments and NGOs from the North. The Review addresses this concern from a development perspective. It also attempts to provide developing countries' Governments and civil society with a forum in which to discuss their most important trade and environment issues and from which to influence the international agenda.

Competition, Competitiveness and Development: Lessons from Developing Countries

This publication focuses on the policy options available to developing countries, including LDCs, and on the role of competition policy in the overall design of a coherent development-oriented competition policy. It also elucidates the mechanisms through which competition policy can contribute to improved economic performance by fostering enterprise development, investment, productivity and exports. Case studies of specific countries include a wide range of developing economies. The message of this publication is that significant efforts are needed to ensure that competition policies have the desired developmental effects. Lastly, the book makes a series of recommendations for policy changes and institutional reforms.



Development and Globalization: Facts and Figures

Through succinct explanations and presentation of key figures, *Development and Globalization: Facts and Figures* surveys major developments in the world economy over the past 40 years. The publication is a quick-reference tool for evaluating the growth prospects of developing countries. It also provides an overview of UNCTAD's work to identify the best policies and practices for developing countries to adopt in their quest for efficient economic and social progress and well-being. The publication covers 43 topics in the areas of population and economic trends, external finance and debt, foreign direct investment, transnational corporations and foreign affiliates, international trade in merchandise and services, production, trade and pricing of commodities, production and trade of manufactures, and information and communication technologies.

Upcoming events

- Trade and Development Board, fifty-first regular session (4-15 October 2004)
- Expert Meeting on Free and Open Source Software: Policy and Development Implications (22-24 September 2004)
- Expert Meeting on New and Dynamic Sectors (27 September - 1 October 2004)
- Expert Meeting on Issues Related to Good Public and Corporate Governance in the Area of FDI (1-3 November 2004)
- Expert Meeting on the Impact of FDI on Development (3-5 November 2004)

For more information on forthcoming events, please check [Events and Meetings](#).

NGOs enjoying observer status with UNCTAD automatically receive official notifications inviting them to participate in and contribute to the debate and discussions of Expert Meetings, sessions of the Commissions of the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board, and quadrennial sessions of the Conference. Competent and relevant NGOs interested in contributing to UNCTAD's programmes and activities may wish to consider applying for observer status.

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For more information, please visit UNCTAD's website:

www.unctad.org