



UNCTAD

UNCTAD XIII Pre-Conference Event

**Policy Dialogue: Redefining the Role of the Government in
Tomorrow's International Trade**

**26 – 27 March 2012
Room XVI, Palais des Nations, Geneva**

OPENING SPEECH

THE CHAIR

H.E. Ms. Anabel González,
Minister of Foreign Trade, Costa Rica

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09:45, Monday 26 March 2012, Room XVI

1. The underlying theme of the Policy Dialogue is what will be the expected role of the Government with a view to linking international trade development in the coming decade to inclusive and sustainable growth.
2. Openness is the characteristics of this Policy Dialogue. The objective of this meeting is to have a brainstorming among us to gather innovative forward-looking views and ideas, and not to get an “agreed conclusion”.
3. UNCTAD is an ideal forum for this open brainstorming where all stakeholders - the government, civil society and the business sector – can freely exchange their views.
4. During the preparatory process for this Policy Dialogue, UNCTAD has received many valuable ideas in response to its “Call-for-Views”, which was conducted at the end of last year. The views received from the networks of Civil Society as well as of the UNCTAD Virtual Institute helped concretize the concept of this Policy Dialogue. Some of the views will be presented here during the four thematic sessions.
5. This Policy Dialogue is placed as a pre-conference event to the UNCTAD XIII, which will be held in Doha, Qatar in April. That is, the collection of views, analysis and ideas that are expressed and discussed here will be fed through to the discussions at the UNCTAD XIII.

Motivation of the Policy Dialogue

6. What motivated this Policy Dialogue is the fact that the landscape of international trade has changed considerably, particularly in the last decade:

- Successive trade liberalization at unilateral, multilateral and regional/bilateral levels, the progress in information and communication technology and transport, and fluid capital mobility – all facilitate today’s intricate web of trade flows, particularly flows of intermediate goods through global value chains (GVCs), often called “trade in tasks”;
- The growth pole of international trade has shifted from the North to the South, particularly to a number of emerging economies. South-South trade is no longer a novelty; it is expanding with such a speed that it will soon become the main stream of international trade flows;
- Challenges of global scale - ranging from climate change to energy resource crunch and food security concerns – that require a paradigm shift in industrial and agricultural production processes.

7. The new realities have a transformative influence over the objective and the scope of trade policy, and the trade policymaking processes. That is, for the government trade policymakers, “business-as-usual” approach is no longer an option.

8. With respect to the objective of trade policy, we need to move beyond the concept of “export-led-growth”, by clearly defining what type of “growth” we want to achieve. The theme of UNCTAD XIII is “Development-centered globalization: Towards inclusive and sustainable growth and development”. In this Policy Dialogue, we will focus on how international trade can enhance economic growth that is inclusive and sustainable.

9. As regards the scope of trade policy, it has been widened from border measures such as tariffs to non-tariff measures (NTMs) that involve all sort of domestic regulatory measures. They include standards, competition policy, innovation and investment policies, intellectual property rights, and banking and business licenses.

“Green” industrial policy and border carbon adjustments are new concerns. Dealing with NTMs, however, entails changes in policies that are linked to socio-economic concerns of a country such as food safety, environment protection, and labor policy – the areas that are not normally under the jurisdiction of the trade authority.

10. Session 1 that is divided into 2 parts will address the questions concerning the objective and the scope of trade policy in tomorrow’s international trade.

11. Changes in the objective and the scope necessarily require changes in the trade policymaking process. It requires more effective inter-Ministerial coordination within the government. It also requires a mechanism that enables the needs and concerns of the domestic business sector and civil society to constitute the backbone of a country’s trade policy.

12. This question will be addressed in Sessions 2 and 3.

13. Session 4 draws upon the discussions made in the previous three sessions, and on what should constitute the trade agenda in the coming decades.

Organization/structure of the Policy Dialogue

14. Each session is moderated by the leading thinker or the practitioner of the session’s theme, who are: Professor Robert Wolfe of the Queen’s University, Canada, for Session 1; Dr. Peter Draper of the Tutwa Consulting for Session 2; Mr. Mark Halle of the International Institute of Sustainable Development for Session 3; and Professor Jean-Pierre Lehmann, Director of the Director of the Evian Group@IMD, Lausanne for Session 4.

15. These distinguished moderators will drive the discussion. They will be also actively participating in the debate in the sessions where they are not moderating.

16. Each session starts with a group of panelists. They have been requested to be as provocative as possible when they present their views and ideas to us. The

distinguished panelists are requested to keep their presentations within the 10-minute limit, in order to ensure sufficient time for an interactive debate.

17. After the presentation by the panelists, the floor will be open for an interactive debate. You are all invited to actively participate in the debate.

18. As mentioned, the objective of this meeting is not to get an “agreed conclusion” but to exchange and discuss as many innovative and forward-looking views as possible.

19. Let us all breakout of the negotiating mind-frame, the confrontational mind-frame, or the 20th century mind-frame.