

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

UN Trade Forum 2023

8–9 May, 2023, Geneva

Intervention

H.E. Mr. Federico Villegas

President of the GSTP Committee of Participants, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary,
Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of the Argentine Republic to the United Nations Office and other
international organizations in Geneva

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of UNCTAD

Ambassador Federico Villegas' GSTP COP President's intervention in the UN Trade Forum

Session 1 "The South-South trade partnership for accelerating the SDGs achievement"

8 March 2023, 10 – 12 a.m., Room XXVI

- We are witnessing world shaping events that have a direct impact in developing countries: the effects of 3 years of a pandemic that only since last Friday is officially over; the effects of climate change for livelihoods, economies and life itself; and a war at the heart of Europe with global impact on trade, development and a shuffle of geopolitics.
- In this context there are indeed additional challenges for developing countries, but also new opportunities. Our resilience is being tested, that is why we have to gather in every multilateral space to discuss initiatives and approaches that will make trading systems more resilient, particularly in developing countries, as our contribution towards **the 2023 SDG Summit (September, 2023) and after that the Summit of the Future** among others.
- One of those opportunities is to give GSTP a new life by revitalizing its intergovernmental processes. In order to implement **"high-impact initiatives"** that could allow developing countries respond to global challenges, and to expedite progress towards the SDGs.
- We have to use all tools at our disposal to improve the performance of developing countries, otherwise the SDGs will not be achieved by humanity at large if developing countries are left behind. This is a fact. GSTP has long suffered from the lack of impetus for forward movement, it is my intention to consult closely **with GSTP members to identify ways in which the GSTP could be leveraged** to better respond to global challenges and achieve the SDGs.
- **Naturally, the immediate courses of actions of utmost importance is to mobilize efforts towards the entry into force of the São Paulo Round results.** I am encouraged here with the recent ratification by Brazil of the SPR Protocol, which has given us a much-needed movement. I intend to reach out other SPR signatories to see where we are in the remaining ratifications and see what support can be extended to lift the obstacles and facilitate their internal processes.
- It is therefore my intention **to call a formal session of the Committee of Participants** in the coming weeks to allow us to take stock of current status in SPR ratifications, identify any technical works to be conducted, and discuss the way forward in the short- to medium-terms. The forthcoming major international events, especially UNCTAD@60 and G77 and China@60 in 2024, and UNCTAD16 in 2025 will set major milestones to guide our actions.

- Implementing SPR results will finally allow us to move forward to envisage **new actions and initiatives**, not only in terms of tariffs but also addressing such novel issues as non-tariff and measures harmonization and trade facilitation on horizontal or sectoral basis. If we look at the main challenges for the developing world, like food insecurity and climate adaptation, we need to be ambitious. This means to launch a **new work program such as food products and environment goods**, which I believe would merit positive consideration by members. If developing countries do access rapidly to technology for climate adaptation it will be too late even for those who have already the technology.

- Concomitantly, and as may be decided by the Committee, with a view to securing an entry into force of the São Paulo Round results and exploiting the full potential of the GSTP, I would ask the secretariat and invite the GSTP members to take concerted actions in the following directions:
 1. Raise **public profile of the GSTP and improve information dissemination** through communication means, including improving UNCTAD website, public outreach including Wikipedia page and social media in different languages;
 2. Launch **interactive GSTP members-only private website** where all past documentation and relevant information is made available to the GSTP members;
 3. Conduct **information sessions and outreach activities** to individual GSTP members to raise awareness and facilitate their internal ratification processes, including for capital-based officials as well as for Geneva and New York delegates;
 4. Conduct **technical and analytical work** on issues that may be required for the SPR implementation and identification of new initiatives. For instance, we would need to examine how SPR tariff concessions concluded over 10 years ago could be effectively implemented under today's national tariff schedules. This may involve the conversion of SPR tariff schedules into the current version of Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (Harmonized System).

- The GSTP provides a **unique partnership platform** for deeper trade cooperation among developing countries. We now need to put it into a productive use with creative thinking and concrete actions.

- As **UNCTAD and the Group celebrates 60th anniversary in 2024** and will hold its 16th quadrennial Ministerial Conference in 2025, securing the entry into force of the São Paulo Round Protocol in 2024 and launch a new work program such as on environment and food production at UNCTAD16 in 2025 can be set our shared ambition.

- To that goal, I will proceed in close consultation with the GSTP membership and in cooperation with our broader constituencies, namely G77 and China. I will also count on UNCTAD support in this endeavor under the leadership of SG Grynspan.