

CUTS Geneva Resource Centre Session in the WTO Geneva Week on 6 May 2010

“Improving Inclusiveness of Trade Policy Making in Developing Countries”

CUTS Geneva Resource Centre organized the session for delegates from twenty WTO members who do not have missions in Geneva and came to participate in the Geneva Week. Some regional economic communities like CARICOM, SADC, UEMOA and other organizations like IDB, APEC and the Commonwealth Secretariat also participated. Below is a summary report of the event.

The event was moderated by Atul Kaushik, Director CUTS Geneva Resource Centre. Presentation on improving trade policy making in developing countries was made by Rashid Kaukab, Deputy Director CUTS Geneva Resource Centre. There were two discussants: Mr. Elijah B. Manyara, Principal Counsellor (Commerce), Permanent Mission of Kenya to the UN and Other International Organizations in Geneva and Mrs. Jan Bailey, First Secretary, Permanent Missions of New Zealand to the UN and Other International Organizations in Geneva.

In his presentation Mr. Kaukab gave an overview of the trade policy making process in developing countries as seen from the research findings of a CUTS project on “Fostering Equity and Accountability in the Trading System”. He described the main stakeholders and features of formal consultative mechanisms as well challenges faced by different stakeholders. He also presented the Inclusive Trade Policy Making Index model used in the study to qualitatively assess inclusivity of trade policy making in the project countries.

Mr. Manyara presented the Kenyan experience in trade policy making and its effectiveness. He stated that though institutional mechanisms exist, the process is still faces challenges like lack of coordination between and among trade Missions and their capital; poor linkages and networking of the key Ministries involved in national development plans; and failure to sustain capacity built within Ministries due to transfer of personnel. Gender equity is an additional and recent challenge that needs to be addressed, and the policy in Kenya now ensures a 30% representation of women among the stakeholders. Need for further technical and financial assistance to address these challenges was highlighted.

Mrs. Bailey discussed the development assistance by New Zealand to the Pacific island countries aimed at promoting sustainable economic development through sound trade policies in the region. The trade related assistance by New Zealand promotes greater regional economic integration, provides Aid for Trade and builds trade capacity and market access opportunities. It has provides country specific assistance to Vanuatu. Mrs. Bailey emphasized the importance of trade mainstreaming.

Participants engaged in a lively discussion on the presentations. They appreciated the project undertaken by CUTS in analyzing trade policy making processes that leads to more inclusiveness. Importance of parliamentarians as stakeholders was emphasized. Political

challenges in the countries, impact of global situation like the one arising out of the financial crisis and the volcanic ash, and other elements were added as external challenges needing to be kept in view while addressing trade policy making. A desire for similar projects in French speaking countries by CUTS was expressed. Participants also expressed a desire to know more about activities of CUTS, including in the area of consumer protection.