

# Geneva Trade & Business Connexion

## South & Southeast Asia

“Bridging the gap between South and Southeast Asian WTO delegates and their national private sectors”

CUTS International, Geneva, in partnership with partners on the ground in selected South & South-East Asian developing countries, aims to improve the capacity of private sectors in these countries to input into their WTO delegates positions. Connecting these stakeholders contributes to South & South-East Asian developing country negotiating positions more fully aligned with the on-the-ground conditions faced by their business communities and ultimately to improved private sector development at the national level.

[www.cuts-geneva.org/Geneva\\_Connexion\\_SNSEAsia.html](http://www.cuts-geneva.org/Geneva_Connexion_SNSEAsia.html)

### About

WTO negotiators in Geneva are not always fully aware of the interests and concerns of their private sectors. This can lead to negotiating positions which do not adequately address trade impediments. This problem can be most pronounced for developing and least developed country delegations, such as some South & South-East Asian countries, which lack the resources and established systems in capitals to undertake broad stakeholder consultation. This can be mitigated by creating and maintaining regular communication channels and mechanisms, supported by demand-driven research and analysis. The proposed project by CUTS International, Geneva aims to do that by:

- **Enhancing knowledge of WTO delegates** on their private sector constituencies’ needs and challenges.
- **Enhancing knowledge of private sector constituencies** on the functioning of the WTO.
- **Establishing foundations for lasting links** between WTO delegates and their private sector constituencies so that objectives one and two can be independently sustainable beyond the life of the project.

### What we do

#### BI-MONTHLY FORUMS

##### ● Geneva Meetings

Beneficiary developing countries’ WTO negotiators meet every two months at CUTS International, Geneva office to focus on one of the issues identified during the preparatory phase. Each meeting is an opportunity for participating countries’ negotiators to exchange views

on the topic at stake, ask questions and clarifications and explore ways to bring new ideas in their WTO-related work. During the forums, negotiators receive two types of resource documents:

##### ● WTO Issue Notes

These notes prepared by CUTS International, Geneva provide a brief background of the issue as well as analysis and options for consideration by the delegates. Analysis includes a gender dimension as appropriate.

##### ● Country Update Notes

These notes are prepared by local civil society partners, in consultation with national private sector organizations. The notes compile and summarise the views of private sector stakeholders in the beneficiary country on the issue.

#### RESEARCH & NETWORKING

##### ● On-demand Studies

Further, on-demand research studies are developed on delegates’ request, or based on a specific need expressed by the private sector in beneficiary countries. CUTS International, Geneva makes sure that these outputs address specific technical needs of the negotiators and/or national private sectors, propose concrete recommendations and are user-friendly.

##### ● E-forum

A dedicated forum is available on CUTS International, Geneva’s website ([www.cuts-geneva.org](http://www.cuts-geneva.org)) to bridge the gap between WTO delegates and their private sector constituencies. It serves as a direct communication means.

## Issue Coverage

Key sectors active in the beneficiary countries, as well as main issues of interest to national private sectors and Geneva delegates related to WTO discussions, where greater communication between these stakeholders would be advantageous, are identified by CUTS International, Geneva in consultation with beneficiary countries' WTO negotiators and project national implementation partners.

It results in a list of five issues to be possibly covered during the course of the project, while fully recognising that based on needs/demands of the beneficiaries, some of the identified issues could be dropped or covered in greater depth.

## Key Features

This initiative approaches achieving the project objectives by:

- Linking negotiators with their businesses and private sector organizations on the ground;
- Directly involving WTO delegates with their private sector stakeholders, including through an online forum and mailing lists;
- Providing concrete information from the ground, emanating from private sector players themselves.
- The Forum format has been used by CUTS International, Geneva in the past and has proved to be a useful **mutual learning** platform where both common challenges and common best practices can be identified and better addressed.
- It also enables delegates to **take time for informal discussions among themselves**, including on preventing possible clashes between their WTO positions.

### CUTS EXPERTISE

CUTS International, Geneva is a policy-based NGO that catalyses the pro-trade, pro-equity voices of the Global South in international trade and development debates in Geneva. Through previous and on-going work, it has made a name for capacity building and linking people and issues in the world of multilateral trade with their counterparts in related policy areas.

We have also become a prime interlocutor of developing countries and international organisations in Geneva. Our relevant track record and expertise include: regular negotiators' Forums; provision of technical papers used by WTO Negotiators; empowering stakeholders, including the private sector in developing countries; publication of a WTO Negotiators' Handbook; and physical presence and partnerships in developing countries.

CUTS International's family of organizations, particularly from offices in India and Vietnam, is active on various issues including strengthening grassroots' knowledge and capacities, as well as enhancing synergies between policies and stakeholders. In the South & South East Asian region,

With the funding support of  
Australian Aid



**CUTS INTERNATIONAL, GENEVA**

37-39, Rue de Vermont, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland  
Ph: +41 (0) 22 734 60 80 | Fax: +41 (0) 22 734 39 14  
Email: geneva@cuts.org | Web: cuts-geneva.org