

## **Realising the Doha Development Agenda As if the Future Mattered**

*The captioned seminar was held at Salzburg, Austria from 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> February 2007. I attend the event on behalf of CUTS International. It was organised by the German Marshall Fund of the US, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, USA and the Salzburg Seminar. It was held at Schloss Leopoldskron – the place where the Sound of Music movie was made. The following is a back-to-office-report.*

### The Purpose

The purpose of the event is manifested in its title. It was based on a premise that concluding the Doha Round will be difficult, especially if it is to really advance a development agenda. At the same time and another premise was that any deal must also more successfully (constructively) integrate developing countries into the global economy, allowing to participate in the economic growth that trade can bring. This contradiction reverberates throughout the meeting and many participants were forceful that development should not be an after-thought, an add-on or an optional extra – a good deal must integrate the developing countries into the governance of the WTO.

### The Participants

They were from top to various levels. WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy delivered two plenary addresses. There were representations from various developing-country missions in Geneva – ambassadors. Many NGOs and business representatives were there too. From India, T. S. Vishwanath of Confederation of Indian Industry and Jamshed Irani, Member of the Board of Directors of Tata Steel and Tata Motors participated.

### The Process

Started with “scenario planning”, the agenda was made up of three interlocking phases:

- Bringing it Back to the Negotiations: Briefing from the Chairs of various WTO Committees (Special Sessions)
- Addressing Key Issues
- Plenary Session: Synthesis

### Highlight

- Good networking opportunities – discussing ideas with new people, which culminated in some concrete plans in some cases

### Lowlight

- Sometimes discussions were becoming a bit too much US-centric – bringing them back to a more balanced one and development-oriented was a continuous act on the part of some participants

## Key Issues Emerged

- Delivering on development essentially means market access in all areas. It is not just about “aid for trade”. There is a need to develop the capacity of American and European NGOs on what development means in the WTO – “Unpacking Development in the WTO”. And it also depends on actions of others (like the World Bank).
- Balance between producers’ interest and consumers’ interests from trade liberalization are missing in the current discourse. There is an urgent need to foster this balance. This is true in all areas, including rules such as anti-dumping measures. Advocate benefits of trade liberalization to consumers.
- Aid for trade is not just about capacity building and it is to be looked at from:  
a) WTO is a point of leverage to increase aid, b) coherence between the WTO and aid agencies is a must, and c) transparency and mutual accountability of aid should be in place.
- It is to be realised that not just EU and US but all developing countries have export interests and import sensitivities – political dimensions of trade liberalization.
- Leadership on WTO issues on the part of developing countries does not mean fast opening on their markets. All developing countries need domestic policy space for development and time to adjust so as to mainstream international trade into development. National policies on trade adjustments are to be looked at.
- Bilateral and regional deals are trade-building exercises and should be looked at as building blocks.
- This round of negotiations should set the stage for the next round in which all subsidies in the rich world should be removed and tariffs should come down to a minimum level (with any escalation and peaks). While concluding the Uruguay Round did we thought that export subsidies in the rich world will be removed by 2013? Church groups (especially in the US) should be involved in this exercise – the Jubilee 2020 Campaign!