

WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy's Speech at CUTS Silver Jubilee Celebration

12 August 2008, Inspire Hall, Hotel Le Meridien, New Delhi

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me a great pleasure to note that CUTS is celebrating its Silver Jubilee. 25 years is a long time. The world – and India – have changed dramatically since the time CUTS was established. What is noteworthy is the journey of CUTS from an activist organisation working for the welfare of Indian consumers, to a think-tank advocating for global welfare through its work on trade and regulatory issues. It has, in fact, strengthened the link between grassroots concerns and international policy-making arena.

My association with CUTS dates back several years, when I was living in Brussels and wearing a different hat. CUTS took initiatives in trying to help the launching of the Doha Development Agenda and in bridging differences between India and some of its trading partners. At that time, it gathered a number of researchers from Europe and India to work together on a set of trade issues, to see why and how such differences should and could be resolved. I remember speaking at the launch of that initiative in 2002. We should be inspired by such initiatives today, to take forward the negotiations and strengthen the international trading system.

Recently CUTS has established an office in Geneva – where I have been living for the last 3 years, with my new hat. I am convinced that the new Geneva Office, with a pro-trade, pro-consumer and above all, pro-development focus, will complement the Geneva civil society trade-scene. Finding the balance between needs and challenges has always been key to the success of CUTS, an international NGO with offices in 6 countries and activities all around the world. Two decades ago, no one would have imagined CUTS where it is now. But thanks to continuous high quality research and effective networking and advocacy, CUTS has grown into a highly respected and internationally recognised outfit. The WTO too has benefited from CUTS' knowledge of the trade challenges and limited capacity of developing countries. It has, for example, been instrumental in the first strategic review of WTO's trade-related technical assistance and training programme and has contributed substantially the debate on aid-for-trade so far.

It will come as no surprise to anyone in this room that much of this success is owed to Pradeep Mehta, CUTS' tireless and political savvy Secretary General. Over the years, Pradeep has proven to be a true leader and champion of development interests and has consistently recognised and promoted the rules-based trading system as a key element in promoting growth and development.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am confident that CUTS will achieve more and more success in future. My wishes are with CUTS and I am sure to be much benefited from its work in future.