

Summary Report

Meeting of Delegates from the Geneva Missions of South Asian Countries

CUTS Geneva Resource Centre Conference Room, 21 June, 2011

1. The 9th informal, quarterly meeting of the Geneva Missions delegates of South Asian countries was held at CUTS GRC at lunch time on 21st June 2011. All eight South Asian Missions in Geneva were invited. Participants from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka attended the meeting.
2. As per the latest developments in the WTO, the first discussion item for this meeting related to the proposed Plan B by DG of the WTO, intended to unlock the Doha Round of Negotiations. The second agenda item related to briefing on on-going and planned regional projects by CUTS in South Asia.

Main Points from the Discussion

3. The participants noted that the region is one of the least integrated of the world and that any initiative to enhance intra-regional trade should be welcomed. In this regard, they thanked CUTS for providing a Forum for informal and useful discussions.
4. While South Asian countries are a very diverse regional grouping, they share common interests on a number of issues on the WTO agenda, e.g. GATS Mode 4. Efforts to identify areas for common positions should continue and be strengthened.
5. There was a general feeling that what the Plan B will include is still not clear, and that including too many issues in the LDC+ lane would be risky. The delegates therefore

called for a realistic December 2011 package. It was noted that Plan B could be a promising route for the DDA to deliver on its development promise.

6. Two issues are of critical importance to LDCs and need to be included in the fast track under Plan B: the Services Waiver and Duty Free Quota Free Market Access (DFQF). On the latter, it is not clear whether the package will aim at 97% or 100% of tariff lines.
7. CUTS also presented the programmes currently being undertaken by the organisation in the region, including perception surveys on climate change and food security, and on the cost of economic non-cooperation to consumers. The delegates welcomed CUTS' initiatives which address main areas of current and future concern in the region. It was suggested that the discussions in this Forum could also address such non-WTO topics at times and that CUTS should regularly brief the delegates on such regional projects.

Next meeting

8. It was agreed to hold the next informal Forum meeting in July. CUTS GRC would communicate a convenient date to the delegates.
9. In view of the importance of the subject and the fruitful discussions held during this meeting, it was also agreed that the discussions in the next Forum meeting will follow up on the Plan B towards the Ministerial Conference of December 2011.
10. Finally, it was agreed that CUTS will share with Geneva-based South Asian delegates regular information and outputs from its activities related to South Asia.