



## *Ensuring Sustainability through Trade Agreements*

***Organised by the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) under the RTA Exchange initiative with the support of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)***

### Agenda

Date: 29 March 2017

Venue: Maison de la Paix, Petal 5, Chemin Eugène-Rigot 2, Geneva

#### **Background**

Since the early 90's and the negotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), several bilateral or regional trade agreements have incorporated explicit provisions related to sustainable development, ranging from specific conditionalities in unilateral preference schemes (e.g EU GSP +) to more comprehensive approaches in the context of reciprocal free trade agreements. Over time, as different models and practices emerged, such provisions have evolved and become more sophisticated in their scope and their approach.

Today, Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs) include a wide variety of provisions going from innovative cooperation mechanisms; through provisions to address conflicts at the intersection of trade and sustainable development; to measures promoting compliance with international or domestic environmental and labour laws; or regulatory commitments to advance social or environmental objectives. In addition to providing enforceable disciplines that advanced sustainable development, these bilateral and regional agreements also acted as fertile ground for innovation and cooperation.

Such developments contrast with the limited progress observed at the World Trade Organization (WTO) where most evolutions occurred through jurisprudence as opposed to new commitments or disciplines. As the international community moves towards the implementation of the newly agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the treatment of sustainability concerns in bilateral and regional arrangements provides essential precedents and practical experiences from which lessons or best practices can be drawn to inform developments at the multilateral level, be it at the WTO or in other international arena. What are the main tensions between RTAs and the multilateral trade system (MTS) and possibly among RTAs themselves? Do existing initiatives provide approaches that outsiders would find favourable? Are such rules easy for developing economies to adopt? Can they be replicated or adapted at the multilateral level? What specific ideas could be harvested for the MTS?

This dialogue will serve as a platform for the exchange of ideas, experiences and good practices, and explore possibilities for convergence and coherence building between RTAs and the multilateral trade system. A select group of representatives from governments, businesses, civil society, international organizations and academia has been convened to participate and exchange informal views for a fruitful discussion.

## **Agenda**

### **9:00 – 9:15 Welcome Remarks**

- Dominik Ziller, BMZ
- Ricardo Meléndez-Ortiz, ICTSD
- Julia Muir, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

### **9:15 – 10:45 Session I: Sustainability provisions in RTAs**

Moderator: Ricardo Meléndez-Ortiz, ICTSD

This session will provide an overview of how sustainability concerns, including environmental and social concerns, have been addressed in modern RTAs. It will review the evolutions of such provisions over the last 25 years but also the evolution of institutional mechanisms and enforcement procedure.

Speakers:

- Peter Draper, Tutwa Consulting
- Elizabeth Echeverria Manrique, International Labour Organization
- Markus Krajewski, University of Erlangen

Discussants:

- Franz Christian Ebert, Max Plank Institute
- Karim Karaki, ECDPM

*Open discussion*

### **10:45 – 11:15 Coffee Break**

### **11:15– 12:45 Session II: Lessons from different models**

Moderator: Julia Muir, IDB

This session will review the treatment of sustainability provisions under different approaches or families of agreements (e.g. the EU, US or EFTA models). It will discuss in particular the latest incarnation of such approaches by looking at recent agreements including the so-called mega regional agreements.

Speakers:

- Madelaine Tuininga, Unit for Trade and Sustainable Development, DG Trade, European Commission
- Henry Gao, Singapore Management University
- Tom Jenkins, European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)

Discussants:

- Ambassador Juan Carlos Gonzalez, Permanent Mission of Colombia to the WTO
- Christian Pitschas, IDEAS Centre
- Pablo Lazo-Grandi\*, Former negotiator for labour provisions in RTAs, Chile

*Open discussion*

12:45 – 14:00 **Lunch**

14:00 – 15:30 **Session III: Lessons from the negotiating and implementation of sustainability provisions in RTAs: A sectoral approach**

Moderator: Anja Gomm, BMZ

This session will discuss the challenges and benefits resulting from the implementation of relevant RTA provisions dealing with sustainability in both developed and developing countries. It will review in particular, the extent to which the implementation of such provisions has effectively contributed to addressing sustainability concerns and challenges among signatories.

Speakers:

- Ambassador David Walker, Permanent Mission of New Zealand to the WTO
- Clara Brandi, German Development Institute/ Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE)
- Gail Strickler, Former Assistant US Trade Representative for Textiles, responsible for negotiations of US FTAs on textiles
- Agus Sarsito, Center for Forestry Standardization and Environment

Discussants:

- Ambassador Kyonglim Choi, Permanent Mission of Korea to the WTO
- Axel Marx, University of Leuven

*Open discussion*

15:30 – 16:00 **Coffee break**

16:00 – 17:30 **Session IV: Ways forward and prospects for multilateralization**

Moderator: Ricardo Meléndez-Ortiz, ICTSD

This session will explore prospects at the multilateral level to advance a constructive discussion on sustainability drawing from the experience of RTAs and suggesting possible ways forward.

Discussants:

- Aaron Cosbey\*, Independent Consultant
- Thoralf Stenvold, International Labour Organization
- Harsha Vardhana Singh, Brookings India
- Peter Draper, Tutwa Consulting
- Aik Hoe-Lim, WTO

*Open discussion*

17:30 – 18:00 **Concluding remarks**

*\*to be confirmed*