

International Civil Society Forum 2005

FOR ADVANCING LDC INTERESTS IN THE SIXTH WTO MINISTERIAL
3-5 October 2005, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Message by *Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, Secretary-General of UNCTAD*

I would have wished to address this important gathering in person but due to a pressing engagement that requires my presence in Geneva I am unable to do so. The Forum coincides with the session of UNCTAD's Trade and Development Board, the first I would be attending since assuming Office as Secretary-General of UNCTAD at the beginning of last month.

Globalization and trade liberalization affect the livelihood and welfare of all people. This is particularly true for the most disadvantaged among them in the least developed countries whose capacity to benefit from these phenomena is severely limited and whose voice too often remains unheard. Therefore the national and international dialogues that shape these processes must be inclusive. The constructive engagement of civil society in international processes such as the Doha Development Agenda through events such as this Forum is a healthy one in collectively facing the challenge of development in a rapidly globalizing world and ensuring its benefits are shared by all.

In this context, UNCTAD has been working closely with civil society in order to better understand and appreciate the development dimension in the multilateral trade agenda and other areas. While at UNCTAD, I undertake to focus our research and analytical work on how best to build a more development-friendly multilateral trading system. This, I believe, is essential if we are to strengthen the system, which is in the interest of both developing and developed trading partners. It will also facilitate the increased participation of developing countries particularly the least developed among them in international trade and thus enhance their prospects of realizing the MDGs.

However, UNCTAD's work to support the Least Developed Countries can not be limited to research and analytical work only. These should merely provide the basis for the delivery of locally tailored and applicable capacity-building work. Here a

number of activities are needed in Least Developed Countries. We need to help them build the capacities of their trade negotiators to use the Doha Round to their greatest advantage. But we also need to look beyond trade negotiations and improve the productive capacity in Least Developed Countries. Frequently, it is supply-side bottlenecks that have hampered the ability of Least Developed Countries to derive significant gains from trade liberalization in general or even from improved preferential market access initiatives. We need to identify the kind of policies and institutions required to overcome such bottlenecks, in addition to ensuring market access for Least Developed Countries. It is precisely to respond to this need that the 2006 UNCTAD's Least Developed Countries Report is devoted to the theme: "Enhancing Productive Capacity". UNCTAD's role could thus be summed up as "*knowledge creation and consensus building for trade and development.*"

Civil society has an important responsibility in its advocacy role about the marginalization of the Least Developed countries in the global economic system. Its views on how the Doha Round negotiations could contribute to improving the situation of these countries through the outcomes in the key issues on the agenda would be useful to all trade negotiators and particularly to the Least Developed Countries themselves. But more important perhaps is ensuring the active participation of the Least Developed Countries in the negotiations at all stages. There is no substitute for this in articulating and defending one's interests.

I wish your deliberations every success.