



**International Conference on
"Mega Trading Blocs: Implications for the South"
15-16 December 2014, New Delhi, India**

CONCEPT NOTE

1. Background

The world economy is witnessing a spectacular rise of mega trading blocs. While the proliferation of regional trading arrangements (RTAs) has by now been a well-recognized salient feature of global trade, with more than 400 RTAs being notified to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), they hardly match the emerging mega regionals such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) covering much of Asia. These super blocs are unprecedented in terms of the number of partner countries involved and their levels of development, the size of traded volume involved, and spread and depth of negotiations.

The mega blocs, unbundling potentially a complex structure of trading systems, certainly pose to trigger profound implications for global economies. On the positive side, given the stalled multilateral trade talks these large scale regional negotiations can result in new trading opportunities and gains. On the other side, there are also serious concerns. First and foremost, a large number of countries are currently outside of these negotiations. For these excluded ones, including the world's poorest and smallest other vulnerable countries, the mega regionals can be discriminatory, yielding loss of preferences and adverse terms of trade shocks. Second, new rules and provisions negotiated and agreed under these new regional frameworks are likely to be more elaborate and encompassing, which capacity-constrained excluded countries will find it extremely difficult to comply with. Third, with the new rules and regulatory frameworks established for mega regional members, integration into the new system will be a challenge for many countries with the scope of their participation in global value chains compromised further. Fourth, with different rules and procedures the mega blocs can create a governance structure in parallel to the WTO. If the multilateral trading system is to be weakened and/or less relevant as a result, the interest of the poorest and most vulnerable countries can get undermined. Finally, the mega blocs also pose challenges to its member countries in terms of new trade liberalization commitments with varying and uncertain gains.

There is a lot of uncertainty about the final outcomes of the mega regional deals that are currently being negotiated. Nevertheless it appears that they are going to have some significant

impact on global trading system and many developing countries. In this backdrop, UNCTAD and Commonwealth Secretariat in collaboration with Centre for WTO Studies (Indian Institute of Foreign Trade) are organizing a policy conference that will seek to discuss the implications of the rise of mega regional trading blocs, especially on the South.

2. Objectives of the workshop

A two day international conference is being organized on 15th-16th December 2014. The conference will help in enriching the understanding on implications of mega trading blocs on developing countries; both included as well as excluded members. The conference will particularly focus on implications of Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA), Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), Regional Comprehensive Partnership (RCEP) among other mega FTAs. Emphasis will be laid both on quantitative analyses of the implications as well as legal analyses of the provisions of the agreements. The likely repercussions of mega trading agreements on multilateral trading negotiations will also be discussed. A book compiling some of the presented papers will be launched in the conference.

The conference aims at providing a common platform to policy makers, industry and academia to have an informed debate on the implications of mega trading blocs based on the detailed quantitative as well as legal analyses of the trading arrangements. The impact of different provisions regarding trade, investment, services, etc will be examined in detail by the presenters along with the sectoral analyses. Industry perspectives will also be taken into account and industry representative from select sectors (labor-intensive and export-oriented sectors) will be invited from different developing and least developed countries. The overall objective of the conference is to deepen the knowledge on implications of emergence of mega trading blocs on the South, using a holistic approach.

The main objectives of the conference are:

- (1) To provide a platform for developing country policymakers and experts facilitating exchange of ideas and views on the issues of interest
- (2) To help policymakers from the developing countries that have largely remained outside of mega regional negotiations obtain informed inputs for helping them assess possible implications and considering strategic and policy options
- (3) To identify issues that would require further research and investigation to help capacity-constrained developing countries in their negotiations of trade deals and other international development support regimes (e.g. Aid for Trade, Post-2015 Development Framework)
- (4) To identify issues and concerns to raise awareness about the likely implications and for global advocacy to protect and promote the interests of poorest, smallest and vulnerable countries.

3. List of Participants

The conference will have 40-50 participants, which will include policymakers, researchers, civil society and industry representatives from 15 countries. The conference will invite 15 papers from developing countries for presentations. The papers will examine implications of TPPA, TTIP, RCEP and other mega trading blocs on included and excluded developing countries. Sectoral impacts will be examined along with legal implications. The conference will also have a panel discussion engaging some of the key resource persons from the industry to provide industry perspectives. Experts from international organizations and reputed think tanks will also be invited. The conference will benefit the policy makers, industry and other stakeholders of the South as it will help them to deepen their understanding of economic and legal implications of mega trading agreements and help them to take informed decisions.

Draft Agenda

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Venue: Hotel The Grand (VasantKunj) New Delhi, 15th -16th December 2014

Day 1

9:30 am – 10:00 am	Registration	
10:00 am – 11:00 am	Inaugural Session: <i>Mega FTAs: Emerging Issues and Concerns</i>	
10:00 am – 10:05 am	Welcome Address	Abhijit Das, Professor and Head, Centre for WTO Studies
10:05 am – 10:10 am	Statement by Commonwealth Secretariat	M.A. Razzaque, Adviser & Head, International Trade Policy Economic Policy Division, Commonwealth Secretariat
10:10 am – 10:15 am	Statement by UNCTAD	Rashmi Banga, Economic Affairs Officer, Economic Cooperation & Integration Among Developing Countries, UNCTAD
10:15 am – 10:35 am	Keynote Address	Arvind Subramanian (tbc), Chief Economic Advisor, Ministry of Finance, Government of India
10:35 am – 11:00 am	Inaugural Address	Rajeev Kher, Commerce Secretary, Government of India
11:00 am – 11:30 am	Tea	
<i>11:30 am - 1:00 pm Technical Session 1- Impact of Mega FTAs on member countries. (Chair Jayant Dasgupta, Former Ambassador of India to the WTO)</i>		
11:30 am – 11:50 am	TPP and Value-added trade: Implications for small included member countries	Rashmi Banga, Economic Affairs Officer, Economic Cooperation & Integration Among Developing Countries, UNCTAD
11:50 am – 12:10 pm	TTIP: Convergence and inequalities in partnership	Jeronim Capaldo, Tufts University
12:10 pm – 12:30 pm	RCEP- Facilitating regional value	Rajan S. Ratna, Economic Affairs

	chains through rules of origin	Officer, Trade Policy and Analysis Section, Trade and Investment Division, United Nations ESCAP
12:30 pm – 1:00 pm	Comments and Open House Discussions	
1:00 pm – 2:00 pm	Lunch	
2:00 pm - 3:30 pm Technical Session 2 - Legal Implications of Mega FTAs (Chair – Dr. V.S. Seshadri, Vice Chairman, Research and Information System for Developing Countries)		
2:00 pm- 2:20 pm	Likely impact of provisions in TPP on investment and government procurement	Sanya Reid Smith, Senior researcher and Legal adviser Third World Network
2:20 pm – 2:40 pm	Implications of TPP provisions on regulatory coherence, state-owned enterprises and competition	Jane Kelsey Professor of Law University of Auckland
2:40 pm – 3:00 pm	Likely impact of TPP provisions on public health	Kajal Bhardwaj, Independent researcher
3:00 pm – 3:30 pm	Comments and Open House Discussions	
3:30 pm – 4:00 pm	Tea	
4:00 pm – 5:30 pm Technical Session 3 - Impact of Mega FTAs on Excluded Developing Countries and LDCs (Chair – Dr. M.A. Razzaque, Adviser & Head, International Trade Policy Economic Policy Division, Commonwealth Secretariat)		
4:00 pm – 4:20 pm	Mega FTAs: How would LDCs be affected	Jim Rollo, Emeritus Professor University of Sussex
4:20 pm – 4:40 pm	Estimating the impact of TPP on excluded countries like India	Sachin K. Sharma, Assistant Professor and Consultant, Centre for WTO Studies
4:40 pm – 5:00 pm	Mega FTAs: Likely impact on excluded countries	Amitendu Palit, Senior Research Fellow & Head (Partnership & Programme), Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore
5:00 pm – 5:30 pm	Comments and Open House Discussions	

Day2

<p>10:00 am - 11:00 am: Technical Session 4 - Implications of Mega FTAs on Services Trade and Investments</p> <p>(Chair – Rashmi Banga, Economic Affairs Officer, Economic Cooperation & Integration Among Developing Countries, UNCTAD)</p>		
10:00 am – 10:20 am	Implications of TPP for Services trade	Rokiah Alavi, Associate Professor Department of Economics International Islamic University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
10:20 am – 10:40 am	Mega FTAs- Implications for trade and investments	Priyanka Kher, Legal Expert
10:40 am – 11:10 am	Comments and Open House Discussions	
11:10 am – 11:30 am	Tea	
<p>11:30 am - 1:30 pm: Technical Session 5- Panel Discussion on mega FTAs: Industry Perspectives</p> <p>(Chair – Abhijit Das, Professor and Head, Centre for WTO Studies, IIFT)</p>		
12 noon – 1:30 pm	Garments (Bangladesh)	Reaz-Bin-Mahmood Vice President BGMEA & & Managing Director, La-Belle Group
	Electronics, telecommunication and electrical industry (Thailand)	Peeranut Phuttal, Manager, WDB Operational Strategy, Electrical, Electronics, Telecommunications and Allied Industry Club, Federation of Thai Industry
	Malaysia	Nizam Mahshar, CEO Majlis Tindakan Ekonomi Melayu MTEM/Malay Chamber of Commerce
	Auto and Auto components (India)	Sugato Sen
	Pharmaceuticals (India)	DG Shah
	FICCI	ManabMazumdar
	CII	Pranav Kumar
	FISME	Anil Bhardwaj

1:30 pm – 2:30 pm		Lunch
2:30 pm – 4:00 pm <i>Technical Session 6 - Panel Discussion: Politics of Mega Trading Blocs and Implications for the Multilateral Trading System</i> (Chair - J.S. Deepak, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce, Government of India)		
2:30 pm – 4:00 pm	Bangladesh	Dr. Mustafa Abid Khan, Director Bangladesh Foreign Trade Institute
	Lesotho	Mr Joshua Setipa - Independent Consultant
	Nigeria	Dr Ebere Uneze - Centre for the Study of Economies in Africa, Nigeria
	Pacific Islands	Veniana Qalo, Senior Trade Policy Expert, Fiji Islands
	Thailand	Srirat Rastapana, Advisor to the Office of the Prime Minister and former Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Commerce
	Vietnam	Dr. Luan Thuy Duong Director General Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam Ministry of Foreign Affairs
4:00 pm – 4:30 pm		Tea
4:30 pm – 5:00 pm		<i>Concluding Session</i>