

WTO Public Forum 2010

Session 22

17 September, 9–11 am, WTO, Room CR II

Social standards and human rights clauses in trade agreements – window dressing, hidden protectionism or furthering the cause?

Trade agreements potentially support or violate human rights, contribute to or harm sustainable development. For trade to be(come) a means to the end of sustainable human development, they have to be supportive of, not contradictory to claims concerning the social dimension of globalization and respect for human rights.

This session will portray current trends regarding the use of social standards and human rights clauses in trade agreements and will argue, from a human rights perspective, that coherence in international law is not only desirable but an actual obligation of states. The panellists will also debate whether the trend to include social and human rights aspects in bilateral agreements is outrunning or forecasting global agreements. The panel will strengthen members' considerations of mainstreaming social and human rights standards and conducting human rights impact assessments in the framework of the WTO, ultimately giving meaning to the WTO preamble of "raising standards of living, ensuring full employment" and the "objective of sustainable development" as the purposes of the organization.

Questions to be discussed include:

- What are the trends in trade agreements regarding the inclusion of social and human rights standards (SHS)?
- Where does the inclusion of SHS into trade agreements draw its legitimacy from?
- What does that project on global negotiations?
- What are the merits of including SHS? What are the dangers of including SHS? How to avoid "hidden agendas"?
- Why is it necessary to include SHS into a global trade agreement?
- How to formulate model agreements?

Speakers:

- Eduardo Muñoz Gómez, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Colombia to the WTO
- John Clarke, Chargé d'Affaires a.i., Permanent Delegation of the European Union
- Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS International
- Claudia Hofmann, University of Kassel, Germany

Moderators:

- Felix Kirchmeier, FES Geneva
- Violette Ruppner, 3D

Please register via the WTO Public Forum 2010 website. Deadline: 9 September 2010