

Strengthening Multilateralism: A Mapping of Proposals on WTO Reform and Global Trade Governance

A joint publication of the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) and the Global Economic Governance Programme, Oxford

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DISCUSSION DRAFT

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This mapping study starts from the premise that the WTO is a valuable and indispensable multilateral institution. However, after an eighty-year history, the multilateral trading system faces a suite of challenges and needs to be strengthened to better reflect the changing global political economy, address sustainable development challenges, and respond to the priorities of its weakest members.

It is in this positive spirit that we publish *Strengthening Multilateralism: A Mapping of Proposals on WTO Reform and Global Trade Governance*. In the 15 years since the World Trade Organization (WTO) was established, the issue of institutional reform - whether it is needed, in what form, and via what kind of process - has been an ever-present issue for the organization and its Member States. While calls for strengthening multilateralism and for WTO reform have been more acute at particular junctures in the WTO's recent history - most particularly following the Seattle, Cancun and Hong Kong Ministerial Conferences - they have been a constant theme of academic commentary and analysis, civil society and business advocacy, parliamentary discussion, and Member State concern. Renewed interest in proposals to strengthen the multilateral trade system and the functioning of the WTO are already evident in preparation for the Seventh Ministerial Conference to be held in November-December 2009.

This 'mapping study' compiles a sampling of the numerous proposals and political statements on reform of the WTO put forward since 1995. The mapping comprises an overview, two Annexes and an extensive reference list for interest readers. The first Annex gathers a sample of political statements and decisions from WTO member states, the WTO Secretariat, and heads of international organizations that speak to the need for strengthening multilateralism, and reform of the WTO and global trade governance. The second Annex similarly compiles a sample of reform proposals, but this time focuses on contributions from academics and stakeholders.

This discussion draft represents the first iteration of the mapping study and is a work-in-progress. This document will be open for comments and inputs until 1 February 2010. To facilitate feedback, a Wiki space for comments on the discussion draft of *Strengthening Multilateralism* can be accessed at: <http://strengtheningmultilateralism.wikispaces.com/>.

PDF copies are available online on ICTSD's website (www.ictsd.org) and via Oxford University's Global Economic Governance Programme (www.globaleconomicgovernance.org) by clicking here: <http://www.globaleconomicgovernance.org/wp-content/uploads/StrengtheningMultilateralism.pdf> .

The final publication is scheduled for early 2010. A web-based version of the final annexes to the report will be published on line with a facility for on-line collaboration to update and supplement the database of reform proposals.

This report builds on the existing work of both the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development and the Global Economic Governance Programme. In particular, it follows our earlier joint publication Rebuilding Global Trade: Proposals for a Fairer, More Sustainable Future, a compilation of short essays on trade and global economic governance published in advance of the G20's London Summit in early 2009.

Since 1996, ICTSD has worked on a range of systemic issues and matters of institutional reform that concern the future of the WTO's and its contributions to sustainable development. These include ICTSD reporting, publications and dialogues on matters ranging from reform of the WTO's dispute settlement process and NGO engagement with the WTO, to initial proposals related to Aid for Trade and ongoing work on the relationship between regionalism and the multilateral trading system.

At GEG's Global Trade Governance Project, this literature review represents the latest phase of scholarly research designed to help bolster understanding of how to make global economic governance work better for developing countries. Surprisingly, while the body of scholarly research on WTO reform has grown, no similarly comprehensive effort has been made to systematically compile an overview of the range of proposals already on the table, and importantly, to organize them according to the WTO function at hand and to differentiate their proposed purposes.