

Guest Editorial: Selected Perspectives on Sustainable Trade

The Covid-19 crisis has revealed the world's vulnerability to global shocks, and the necessity to prioritize non-trade objectives such as health and the environment. These exceptional circumstances have prompted an impetus to put these objectives back at the heart of the trading system and rethink the relationship between trade and those fundamental non-trade interests and objectives. On this occasion, we have rediscovered that the preamble to the Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade

Organization (WTO) refers to the objectives of 'sustainable development' and the protection and preservation of the environment. And that these principles have had little practical implementation so far. Perhaps only by way of exception (the WTO rules allow unilateral measures to pursue legitimate non-trade objectives that affect trade in certain conditions).

A crucial question to be answered is: how can we ensure that the environment is no longer considered as a mere

The following is a reprint of the information about the webinar. We encourage everyone to access the link below and enjoy the webinar.



The Start of a New Era for

Sustainable Development at the WTO?

A 90-minute Zoom Webinar and Roundtable with the current Chair and former Chairs of the WTO Committee on Trade & Environment

When: 12 January 2021, 4:00 pm CET

Meeting Recording:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/z5pn3tTuOrR2rJkVCvP5GWDGVMuRqbBLKbCNOC2LJE_epSdqHjw8U7yNxst4bKkS.aQ_6i8Re10MD7dWe

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The Covid-19 crisis has revealed the world's vulnerability to global shocks, and the necessity to prioritize non-trade issues. These exceptional circumstances have prompted a reflection on the relationship between trade and fundamental non-trade interests and objectives. One of the biggest looming shocks is climate change. The WTO and its Members are currently building on this momentum to elevate climate change on the trade agenda and rethink the relationship between trade and the environment. How can we ensure that the environment is no longer considered as a mere externality of trade and that the multilateral trading system actually fulfils its objective of sustainable development?

This topic is continuously discussed in the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE). During the Trade & Environment Week at the WTO, in November of 2020, a group of WTO Members declared their intention to initiate 'structured discussions' to advance work on trade and environmental sustainability, and a dialogue with external stakeholders such as academics, businesses, civil society members.

The current chair and former chairs of the CTE will debated on:

- The current WTO approach to trade & the environment and its shortcomings in pursuing sustainable development goals;
- Whether and how to rethink the relationship between trade and environment at the WTO;
- New initiatives and on-going negotiations at the WTO;
- Engagement with external stakeholders;

Possible reforms, and the way forward (with a new US administration and a new WTO Director General).

Roundtable participants:

- **Ambassador Chad Blackman**, Permanent Representative of Barbados to the United Nations and the WTO, Chair of the WTO committee on Trade & Environment;
- **Ambassador Manuel Teehankee**, Permanent Representative of the Philippines to the WTO, former chair of the WTO committee on Trade & Environment;
- **Jean-Marie Paugam**, Permanent Delegate of France to the WTO, former chair of the WTO committee on Trade & Environment.

Note: As of the date of publication of Issue 16-7-8, Ambassador Blackman will have left the chairmanship of the WTO Committee on Trade & Environment, Manuel Teehankee will have taken over this role (and be the chairman of this committee again. Jean-Marie Paugam will be Deputy Director General of the WTO).

externality of trade and that the multilateral trading system actually fulfils its objective of sustainable development?

The Global Trade & Customs Journal wanted to make its contribution to the debate on this topical and essential trade issue. On 12 January 2021, it hosted a roundtable on 'The Start of a New Era for Sustainable Development at the WTO?' with current and former chairs of the WTO Committee on Trade & Environment. The programme as well as the link to the recording can be found below.

This special Issue 'Selected Perspectives on Sustainable Trade' is a continuation of this initiative. It presents views, findings and ideas of contributors

from different backgrounds (businesses, academia, non-governmental organizations and international institutions), taking the view that stakeholders' insights are precious in rethinking the nexus between trade and non-trade issues and making solutions emerge. We hope that this initiative will inspire others and contribute to fostering the discussions between trade officials and external stakeholders.

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