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## **COMPLETING THE DOHA DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**

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When in September 2000 the **Millennium Declaration** was signed, 189 world leaders representing all the Member States of the United Nations undertook to "free men, women and children from the abject and inhumane conditions of extreme poverty" by 2015.

This was the first time that such a large number of countries expressly recognized that there were sufficient resources, knowledge and technologies currently in existence to achieve such objectives.

The aims were therefore not a utopia, but achievable, and one of the essential instruments, and perhaps the most important one, in succeeding was the **role that could be played by international trade**. Implementing the Doha Development Agenda, in which the needs and interests of the poor countries are at the centre of the debate, is thus a key element in achieving the objectives.

The World Bank has reported that the adoption of the Doha Development Agenda could generate global income of 500 billion dollars, raising 144 million people out of the clutches of poverty by 2015. To do so requires the **success of the Agenda** as a means of liberalizing world trade, thus avoiding the proliferation of bilateral agreements.

The **increase in bilateral agreements** which has been seen in recent years is a consequence of the fact that multilateral negotiations have not been accompanied by commensurate development in global institutions. Their agendas, dictated by the developed countries, have thus remained incomplete and unbalanced in the view of the developing countries.

Often, the economically weakest countries see the need to subscribe to such bilateral agreements, which tend to weaken the multilateral system. They thus rely on the support of international financial institutions, as this is the sole effective means of increasing their trade.

While we cannot disregard the **importance bilateral agreements can have** for the smallest economies, we must point out that the increasing number of such agreements **poses problems** in respect of their conformity with World Trade Organization (WTO) rules, and represents a diversion of resources from multilateral negotiations.

To avoid a still greater proliferation of bilateralism, the least developed countries should have a **guarantee of full participation** in trade talks so that such multilateral agreements are responsive to their needs and interests.

All of this requires coherence between national development strategies and global economic processes. Countries must try to ensure that the various **national strategies are in keeping** with international talks and processes as a way of accelerating economic growth and encouraging sustainable development.

Devising strategies globally should not necessarily lead to the implementation of global strategies. It is essential, however, that the international community, while seeking greater openness for trade, recognize existing imbalances, allowing for **different paces in the liberalization process**.

Any trade liberalization must take into consideration differences in existing stages of development, for as long as they are not considered, the fruits of trade will not benefit the poorest countries and will continue to fuel migration of their people to more prosperous areas. Development imbalances are one of the main causes of **migration**.

At a time when the free movement of goods, services and capital is being promoted, the movement of people is being restricted. For this reason, global migration agreements must be an inherent part of the current international agenda. Such agreements would tend to replace criteria aimed at controlling migration to the developed countries by others more appropriate to the **dynamics of their labour markets**.

Freer and fairer trade which takes into consideration different development levels will help to **reduce migratory flows** which compel the poor to leave their lands in search of new opportunities. The wealthiest countries must understand that migration control policies do not help to combat this phenomenon, and that the best way to do so is by opening up trade while taking into consideration these imbalances.

While it is clear that **trade liberalization** has improved the living standards of many people throughout the world, offering opportunities to continue in this direction still further, **all countries must be able to benefit from it**. The challenges are enormous, and so are the difficulties. The fact that some countries are not fully benefiting from this liberalization, and that some are not even benefiting at all from it, should be a focus of our attention.

The weakest countries must draw up development strategies in a space where they can at the same time benefit from the international trade system. For this, it is necessary for such countries to have significantly improved **access to world markets** through the reduction of domestic and export subsidies and the elimination of tariffs and other export barriers in the developed countries, in particular in the agricultural and service sectors.

If we genuinely want to have an effective multilateral system, the developed countries have to understand that trade liberalization must be accompanied by a **massive reduction of their agricultural subsidies**, as this is perhaps the main source of distortion of international trade. In more than 50 developing countries, agricultural products account for more than half of export income.

We must continue to underscore that barriers are often not only imposed between countries of different economic levels, but that trade liberalization must also take place in South-South trade, and that the development of **South-South trade** must become a cornerstone for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Such actions must be accompanied by international **cooperation policies** to help in the restructuring of these countries, making them more competitive in the international system. An increase in the flow of financial resources to the economies in transition to help support national policies and programmes and technology transfer will contribute still further to achieving the objectives. Trade liberalization must be accompanied by the consolidation of trade-related technical assistance.

Clearly, beyond the importance of international cooperation, which is estimated at some 50 billion dollars a year, or the cancellation of some of the foreign debt, none of these measures alone can achieve as much as the effects of an opening up of trade.

Like market access mechanisms, restructuring policies must be complemented by **domestic actions** that allow the benefits of increased trade to be oriented to improving the quality of life of the most

vulnerable. That is the basic objective. Measures must be adopted that lead to greater **social cohesion** and to allow for an improvement in living standards.

But the main thrust of conversations on international trade must continue to concentrate on the elimination of trade barriers and on investments that are prejudicial to the poor in the developing countries. Moving toward national standards without correcting the problems engendered by the lack of market access and the maintenance of tariffs on agricultural products means exposing oneself to delays in concluding agreements or producing results that are not necessarily helpful to those who need them most.

However, it is not only by opening up trade that the Millennium Development Goals can be achieved. It is timely to take another series of measures related to international trade which will contribute to fulfilling the goals. We would thus propose that the following measures be taken:

- Encourage and expedite **entry into the WTO** by countries with economies in transition;
- Continue building means of providing WTO **technical assistance**, as for instance through the Global Trust Fund;
- Orient technical assistance toward the **economic diversification** of those countries that depend on trade in their commodities, and seek mechanisms to increase the added value of their exports;
- Work on implementing a mechanism to **stabilize commodity prices** as a way of reducing unfavourable terms of trade;
- Address the problems faced by developing countries for the application of the Uruguay Round agreements and the limited resources at their disposal to fulfil those agreements, paying attention to the **imbalances and asymmetries** inherent to certain WTO agreements.

The increase in world trade is thus a pillar for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and for this, the success of the Doha Development Agenda is essential. A strong and renewed political commitment will be necessary if we want to fulfil the promises that have been made. Success will generate new economic opportunities, stimulate confidence in trade and send an important political signal of support for international cooperation aimed at restoring the health and stability of the world economy. Failure will deprive us of all these benefits.

But the success of the Doha Development Agenda alone cannot achieve the objectives; doing so will also require a coordinated effort by each of the three sources of transformation: the **private sector, the State and civil society**.

The multilateral agenda must again find a **comprehensive vision of development** in which the economic system is subordinated to broader social aims that seek the defence of **human rights**, meaning not only civil and political rights, but also economic and social rights, eliminating all forms of discrimination.

It will be necessary to build a new framework in which international trade helps to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. To do so, as the United Nations Secretary-General has said, "The task now is to turn the **new framework** into a final agreement that delivers this great promise to the developing world", as only a simultaneous effort on all fronts will allow us to achieve this promise of significantly reducing poverty in the world.