



United Nations Environment Programme

برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة • 联合国环境规划署
PROGRAMME DES NATIONS UNIES POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT • PROGRAMA DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS PARA EL MEDIO AMBIENTE
ПРОГРАММА ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ ОБЪЕДИНЕННЫХ НАЦИЙ ПО ОКРУЖАЮЩЕЙ СРЕДЕ

PRESS RELEASE

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Environmental issues at the Doha WTO Trade Talks

DOHA, 9 November 2001 – A successful outcome in Doha would be the launch of a new trade round that builds mutually supportive trade and environment policies.

“Environmental issues, seen by many as a controversial topic, must not be sidelined at the fourth WTO Ministerial Conference that begins today in Doha, Qatar,” said Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). “It is important for all actors in the global trade talks to recognize that we must design new policies, which successfully combine the efficiency and income generating opportunities of trade with effective protection of the environment,” he said.

He said that fears about “environmental dumping” - the idea that countries with lower environmental standards produce cheaper and more competitive products than developed nations with stricter rules - were often exaggerated. Mr. Toepfer also stressed the need for capacity building programmes that help poor countries to develop the knowledge and institutions necessary to make trade and environmental policies “mutually supportive”.

Enhancing all countries' abilities to assess the environmental effects of trade, and trade policies generally, is central to this task.

Together with the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), UNEP has created the Capacity Building Task Force on Trade, Environment and Development (CBTF). This is responding to developing country demands for specific capacity building activities on this policy interface. More than 50 proposals have been received. Eight projects are underway. More will be funded if UNEP and UNCTAD succeed in attracting more financial support from governments, and in particular development cooperation agencies.

UNEP's position on trade and environment is made with a clear understanding of development needs and priorities.

Developing countries need increased access to developed country markets to achieve their goal of raising per capita income. It is also important to retain WTO safeguards that prevent the environment being used as an excuse to keep those markets closed – the danger of “green protectionism”.

However, it is also necessary to ensure that sustained increases in income levels are also sustainable in environmental terms. UNEP is building the capacity of developing countries to design and implement their own national policies for sustainable trade. These will address problems of natural resource depletion and environmental degradation, to "*maximise the net development gains from trade*".

For the Doha meeting, UNEP has produced two papers that examine the complex linkages between trade, environment and development, with a view to supporting more integrated and coherent policy making in these three sectors.

The papers, "Economic Reforms, Trade Liberalization and the Environment: a Synthesis of UNEP Country Projects" and "Enhancing Synergies and Mutual Supportiveness of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and the WTO" are available on the web at <http://www.unep.ch/etu/doha/>. Additional information on the UNEP-UNCTAD CBTF, including current projects of the task force, can be found at this site and also at <http://www.unep-unctad.org/cbtf/>.

The new UNEP papers build on earlier work by the UNEP's Economics and Trade Unit – for more information go to <http://www.unep.ch/etu>

Note to Editors

The first UNEP paper summarizes the results of six projects involving assessment of the environmental effects of trade liberalization and other trade-related policies at the national level. The projects examined the environmental, and related economic and social effects of these policies in the fisheries, agricultural and forestry sectors. The projects related to marine fisheries in Argentina and Senegal, banana production in Ecuador, cotton production in China, cocoa and rubber production in Nigeria, and forestry in Tanzania.

The second paper presents the results of a series of five meetings that UNEP has organised since June 1999 on the relationship between MEAs and the WTO. These meetings have focused on unrealised opportunities to make MEAs and the WTO Agreements work more effectively together in pursuit of sustainable development.

To build capacity for assessment UNEP published a *Reference Manual on Integrated Assessment of Trade-Related Policies*, in June 2001. The reference manual also sought to extend assessment beyond the environmental effects of trade liberalization and other economic policies (eg subsidies) to the related economic and developmental effects of those policies – hence the term "integrated assessment".

Note to journalists

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