

Role of Trade Facilitation in the Context of Increasing Regional Integration of LDCs

**LDC IV Monitor-Southern Voice in association with Centre for Policy Dialogue
Session at the Trade and Development Symposium (TDS), Nairobi**

**Thursday, 17 December 2015; 9:00 am to 10:30 am
Venue: The Hilton Nairobi, Mama Ngina St, Nairobi, Kenya**

1. *Rationale*

In the backdrop of the increasing South-South Cooperation (SSC) and deepening of regional and sub-regional cooperation particularly in trade-related areas, issues of addressing Trade Facilitation (TF) challenges are becoming critically important for many of the least developed countries (LDCs). This is more so since a significant share of LDCs' regional trade takes place through land customs stations. Many LDCs lose out in terms of competitiveness because of the weak state of trade facilitation that raises cost of doing business for importers and exporters, and the adverse impact this has on consumers and producers. Absence of adequate trade facilitation measures is undermining efforts of the LDCs that are geared towards deepening of trade, investment and transport connectivities within region and sub-region. TF measures are becoming urgent because of the existing weaknesses in taking care of the non-tariff barriers, weak border infrastructure, operationalising initiatives to ease transport of goods such as economic corridors and motor vehicle agreements, lack of standardisation and harmonisation of customs procedures. Issues of TF have also assumed heightened importance in view of the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) adopted at the Ninth Ministerial Conference (MC-9) of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Bali in December 2013. As is known, according to the TFA, LDCs will need to notify commitments and identify TF-related areas where supportive measures will be called for in the form of technical assistance and aid for trade facilitation.

In this backdrop, the session envisages to explore possible avenues and modalities to implement the needed TF measures which could help the LDCs in their efforts to take advantage of increasing regional integration of their economies. The objectives of the session, thus, are to: (a) identify the emerging TF-related deficits in view of regional integration of the LDCs, (b) examine concrete measures to address these deficits; and (c) explore possible supportive measures including finance to help LDCs in implementing TF measures

2. Scope of the Session

The session will discuss, *inter alia*, the following issues:

- How the ongoing deepening of SSC and regional and sub-regional integration of the LDCs creating new demands in the areas of TF?
- To what extent the current weak state of TF undermines LDC competitiveness in the context of regional and global integration of their economies?
- Which TF measures should be prioritised that would enable LDCs to take advantage of SSC and regional and sub-regional integration?
- What are the possible avenues of mobilising TF-focused financial resources for the LDCs?
- How the EIF window of the WTO could play a more supportive role in strengthening TF measures in the LDCs?
- Does the WTO-TFA open up new opportunities for the LDCs? If so, how these can be realised?
- What are the possible avenues at the regional level which could help the LDCs to strengthen TF measures?
- Can we think of new institutional mechanisms to mobilise financial resources towards TF efforts undertaken by the LDCs?

3. The Partners

LDC IV Monitor and *Southern Voice on Post-MDG International Development Goals* (Southern Voice) in association with the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) are going to organise the session entitled, “Role of Trade Facilitation in the Context of Increasing Regional Integration of LDCs”.

Southern Voice, launched in 2013, is a network of 49 think tanks from Africa, Asia and Latin America, which is serving as an open platform, to make contributions to the global discussions on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and related issues.

The *LDC IV Monitor* is an initiative which is geared to providing credible, evidence-based and policy-oriented assessment of the state of delivery of the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Actions (IPoA) for the LDCs. A major focus of the *LDC IV Monitor* has been promoting the role of trade as a key means of implementation of the IPoA. *LDC IV Monitor* has partnered with some of the leading think tanks of the world including the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD), Geneva. (www ldc4monitor.org)

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), a globally reputed think tank situated in Dhaka, Bangladesh, is currently acting as the Secretariat of *Southern Voice* and *LDC IV Monitor*. It has a strong track record in undertaking trade-related research and organising national, regional and international events and dialogues to highlight issues and influence policies concerning strengthened regional and global integration of LDCs and developing

countries. CPD has participated, on a regular basis, in various WTO-related events including Ministerial Conferences and WTO Public Forums. CPD has organised several joint events with partners in the side lines of major trade-related global events. Senior CPD professionals have served in high trade-related capacities for the government of Bangladesh, and participated in various trade-related global events as members of government delegation, panellists and commentators. (www.cpd.org.bd)

4. Duration of the Session: 90 minutes

5. Moderator and Panel

Moderator: Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, Chair, *LDC IV Monitor* and *Southern Voice on Post-MDGs*

- Professor Mustafizur Rahman, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka
- Dr Ratnakar Adhikari, Executive Director, Enhanced Integrated Framework Executive Secretariat, WTO
- Another representative of *LDC IV Monitor* (TBC)
- African representative (TBC)