

24 July 2006

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE ON AID FOR TRADE

A. MANDATE

The Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration invited the WTO Director-General to create a Task Force to provide recommendations "on how to operationalize Aid for Trade" and "on how Aid for Trade might contribute most effectively to the development dimension of the DDA". It states that "Aid for Trade should aim to help developing countries, particularly LDCs, to build the supply-side capacity and trade-related infrastructure that they need to assist them to implement and benefit from WTO Agreements and more broadly to expand their trade. Aid for Trade cannot be a substitute for the development benefits that will result from a successful conclusion to the DDA, particularly on market access."

B. RATIONALE

Aid for Trade is about assisting developing countries to increase exports of goods and services, to integrate into the multilateral trading system, and to benefit from liberalized trade and increased market access. Effective Aid for Trade will enhance growth prospects and reduce poverty in developing countries, as well as complement multilateral trade reforms and distribute the global benefits more equitably across and within developing countries.

C. FINANCING

Additional, predictable, sustainable and effective financing is fundamental for fulfilling the Aid-for-Trade mandate. The effectiveness of the following recommendations for operationalizing Aid for Trade requires substantial additional targeted resources for trade-related programmes and projects as pledged at the WTO's Hong Kong Ministerial Conference¹, and against the background of the broader international commitment at the UN's Monterrey Conference and the G8 Summits in Gleneagles and St. Petersburg to significantly scale up development assistance by 2010. The Task Force urges the Director-General to seek confirmation from donors and agencies that funds are readily available for the implementation of the Aid-for-Trade initiative and as part of his mandate to consult on "appropriate mechanisms to secure additional financial resources for Aid for Trade". In order to measure additionality and the adequacy of funding available to meet the Aid-for-Trade needs of developing countries, including those associated with a successful completion of the DDA, an account of what is being done today needs to be established as part of that process. The Task Force urges donors and agencies to provide the necessary information in order to make it possible for the Director-General to fulfill his mandate.

D. SCOPE

The scope of Aid for Trade should be defined in a way that is both broad enough to reflect the diverse trade needs identified by countries, and clear enough to establish a border between Aid for Trade and other development assistance of which it is a part. Projects and programmes should be considered as Aid for Trade if these activities have been identified as trade-related development

¹ In Hong Kong, Japan announced spending on trade, production and distribution infrastructure of \$10 billion over three years, the US announced Aid-for-Trade grants of \$2.7 billion a year by 2010, and the EU and its member States announced trade-related spending of €2 billion per year (up by 600 million) by 2010.

priorities in the recipient country's national development strategies. In this regard, it should be pointed out that while the PRSPs² reflect national development priorities for some countries, other development strategies are equally important and will need Aid-for-Trade financing. At the same time, clear and agreed benchmarks are necessary for reliable global monitoring of Aid-for-Trade efforts to assure accurate accounting and to assess additionality. The following categories, building upon the definitions used in the Joint WTO/OECD Database, have been identified:

(a) *Trade policy and regulations, including:*

Training of trade officials, analysis of proposals and positions and their impact, support for national stakeholders to articulate commercial interest and identify trade-offs, dispute issues, institutional and technical support to facilitate implementation of trade agreements and to adapt to and comply with rules and standards.

(b) *Trade development, including:*

Investment promotion, analysis and institutional support for trade in services, business support services and institutions, public-private sector networking, e-commerce, trade finance, trade promotion, market analysis and development.

(c) *Trade-related infrastructure, including:*

Physical infrastructure

(d) *Building productive capacity*

(e) *Trade-related adjustment, including:*

Supporting developing countries to put in place accompanying measures that assist them to benefit from liberalized trade.

(f) *Other trade-related needs*

Reporting on categories (a) and (b) should follow the definitions in the Joint WTO/OECD Database. The activities that fall outside of the current Joint WTO/OECD Trade Capacity Building Database definition, i.e. category (c), (d) (e) and (f) should be reported as Aid for Trade when these activities have been explicitly identified as trade-related priorities in the recipient country's national development strategies, such as the PRSP.

E. CHALLENGES/GAPS

Since the start of the DDA in 2001, donors have stepped up their commitments on trade-related assistance. More developing countries are also integrating trade into their development strategies. But major challenges remain. These can include:

- Low attention to trade as a tool of development in recipient countries and in donor agencies.
- Insufficient trade mainstreaming in national development strategies and PRSPs.
- Lack of private-sector involvement in identifying trade needs.
- Limited absorptive capacity in recipient countries.

² Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers describe the macroeconomic, structural and social policies and programmes that a low income country will pursue over several years to promote broad-based growth and reduce poverty, as well as external financing needs and the associated sources of financing. They are country-led, country-written documents prepared by governments through a participatory process involving domestic stakeholders and external development partners, including the World Bank and the IMF.

- Inadequate linking mechanisms and lack of predictability in donor response to trade priorities identified at the national and regional levels.
- Lack of coordination and coherence in donors' trade-related response.
- Slow, duplicative and bureaucratic processes in the assessment and delivery of trade assistance, including burdensome parallel structures within recipient countries.
- Lack of data on, and analysis of, trade policies and their impact on development, lack of easily-available information on existing Aid-for-Trade instruments.
- Ineffective monitoring of trade-related country policies and donor activities; absence of rigorous, independent project and programme evaluation and impact assessment.
- Limited support for regional, sub-regional and cross-border trade-related programmes and projects.
- Inadequate support to address the adjustment costs of trade liberalization.
- Insufficient resources for infrastructure and productive capacity building.
- Uneven country coverage.

F. OPERATIONALIZING AID FOR TRADE

F.1 Objectives

- To enable developing countries, particularly LDCs, to use trade more effectively to promote growth, development and poverty reduction and to achieve their development objectives, including the MDGs.
- To help developing countries, particularly LDCs, to build supply-side capacity and trade-related infrastructure in order to facilitate their access to markets and to export more.
- To help facilitate, implement, and adjust to trade reform and liberalization.
- To assist regional integration.
- To assist smooth integration into the global trading system
- To assist in implementation of trade agreements.

F.2 Guiding principles

Aid for Trade should be guided by the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, applicable to all parties involved (donors, agencies and beneficiaries), including key principles such as country ownership, mutual accountability, aligning aid to national development strategies, effective donor coordination, harmonization of donor procedures, use of programme-based aid modalities, managing for result, transparency, and predictable and multi-year commitments, which should be built into all programming. Aid for Trade should be rendered in a coherent manner taking full account, *inter alia*, of the gender perspective and of the overall goal of sustainable development. Administrative costs associated with the delivery of Aid for Trade should be minimized to ensure that the resources go to the actual implementation of identified priority projects and programmes. The competence and skills of the human resources available at national and regional levels should be used in an optimal way.

F.3 Strengthening the "demand side"

A commitment to country ownership and country-driven approaches – as well as a commitment of governments to fully mainstream trade into their development strategies – is key to the effectiveness of Aid for Trade. In some countries, the processes for mainstreaming trade into national development strategies, for formulating trade strategies, and for proposing priority trade projects for donor financing, need to be strengthened through technical assistance and capacity building to help developing countries put in place effective and sustainable trade policy frameworks and processes. Where consultative mechanisms already exist, they can be used – or improved upon. Value-chain analysis could be one valuable tool to identify trade needs.

The Enhanced Integrated Framework (IF) for LDCs. The purpose of the IF is to strengthen the LDCs' trade capacity, including the ability to identify their trade needs and to propose priorities to be supported by development partners. The recommendations on an enhanced IF, as agreed by the IFSC, will be an essential foundation for strengthening the demand-side of Aid for Trade in LDCs.

Non-LDCs. Many other developing countries also need support to mainstream trade into national strategies, to establish broad-based consultation processes involving the private sector, civil society organizations and relevant government agencies to formulate trade strategies, to develop action matrices, and to formulate priority project proposals.

Regional needs. Some of the constraints facing developing countries are regional, sub-regional or cross-border in nature. These needs should be identified and properly addressed. Regional organizations, including regional banks, regional integration organizations and regional economic communities, may play a role in assisting countries to identify such needs.

Recommendations:

- Implement the recommendations for an enhanced Integrated Framework.
- Establish effective national coordination, involving all relevant stakeholders, including the private sector, with a view to identifying the strengths and weaknesses of economies as a whole, and the particular challenges facing the trade sector.
- Explore the necessity of establishing a similar, but separately funded, in-country-process for non-LDCs "(IDA)-only" countries, if such mechanisms do not already exist or can be improved upon.
- Urge agencies, donors and governments in other developing countries to work together to establish similar processes if they do not already exist. These processes should be modeled to the specific circumstances and needs of the country concerned, building on what already exists where possible and appropriate.
- Urge donors and agencies, together with regional banks and organizations, to step up their efforts to identify regional, sub-regional and cross-border needs, including those related to regional integration.
- Establish a system of data collection and analysis at country level.

F.4 Strengthening donor "response"

Donor policies. Donors should give more attention to trade issues in their aid programming and strengthen their trade expertise both in the field and at headquarters. There is a need for improved coordination of staff working across sectors and for greater trade mainstreaming in aid agencies' programmes.

Donor coordination. Greater donor and agency coordination and harmonization of procedures – at both the local and global level – is critical. Trade-related programmes and projects should be more coherent, both in terms of operations and policy.

Donor response. In allocating resources for Aid for Trade, donors and agencies should be guided by priority projects and programmes identified by developing countries, as well as by their potential merit in relation to the objectives for Aid for Trade. These priorities should be mirrored by donor and agency support. Each agency would need to determine how to deploy or reorient its financial and technical assistance to support either capacity building or accompanying measures related to trade liberalization.

Recommendations:

Donors and agencies should:

- integrate trade and growth issues more effectively in their aid programming;
- further strengthen their trade expertise both in the field and in capitals;
- use needs assessment processes (where available), and their results, as a basis for their programming;
- move towards a programme/sector/budget approach, if country owned, if mainstreamed in national development strategies and if a robust system of financial accountability is in place;
- make targeted funds available for building infrastructure and removing supply-side constraints – over and above capacity building and technical assistance – perhaps as co-financing with multilateral development banks; and
- consider channeling Aid-for-Trade Funds multilaterally, when appropriate.

F.5 Strengthening the bridge between "demand" and "response"

F.5.1 Country level

Matching. Strengthened in-country structures, with improved links to donor financing, are needed to help move from trade-related diagnostics to implementation, and to maximize access to multilateral and bilateral resources. The task of matching demand for Aid-for-Trade projects with response could be addressed by strengthening national coordination through a "National Aid-for-Trade Committee", which would include recipient countries, donors, and other relevant stakeholders, such as the private sector, under the leadership of relevant ministries. This committee should complement – not replace – existing PRSPs and other coordination mechanisms. If needed, this process could be supported by agencies that could serve as a clearing house.

Mainstreaming trade. Effectiveness in implementing Aid for Trade will depend on many actors working together in a coherent way. It will involve, for example, the World Bank, the IMF, regional development banks, UN agencies and donors at the national as well as the international level, and trade, agriculture, development and finance ministries at the national level. It is the responsibility of donors, agencies and recipients to do their part in reforming how those entities integrate trade into development and national strategies.

South-South cooperation. Technical cooperation among developing countries is a valuable tool to deliver effective results because of their common experience and understanding of the challenges they face. The valuable technical expertise of the South could be used to implement projects through triangular schemes of cooperation.

Private sector. As actors in the field, private enterprises are well placed to identify trade-related problems and bottlenecks. An increased dialogue between the public sector and private entrepreneurs would improve effectiveness in assessing Aid-for-Trade needs, in diagnostics, and in implementation, as well as in evaluating effectiveness in implementation.

Recommendations:

- Recipient countries should mainstream trade into national strategies, such as PRSPs, formulate trade strategies, and propose priority trade projects for donor financing.
- The division of responsibility for funding and implementing Aid-for-Trade projects and programmes should be addressed through country-based processes such as PRSPs or Consultative Groups, if necessary complemented with a partner conference focusing specifically on trade-related support, convened once countries have integrated trade into their national strategies.

- A National Aid-for-Trade Committee could be established, where necessary, to ensure trade mainstreaming in national development strategies, determine country needs, set priorities, assist in matching "demand" and "response", and help in evaluation. Tasks could include identifying co-financing or leveraging funds from other larger funds, as well as assessing adjustment needs and brokering financing for such programmes. Recipient countries could request agencies to perform a coordinating role.
- Partners should commit to contributing to the implementation of trade strategies and identified priority projects and programmes. The resulting plan should incorporate a results-based management framework resting on – and reinforcing – mutual accountability. Indicators of progress should be agreed.
- Promote the involvement of local, regional and private-sector actors, as well as South-South cooperation through triangular schemes.

F.5.2 Regional level

Many countries require cross-border infrastructure and regional policy cooperation to trade more effectively. The ability to identify cross-border and regional needs should be strengthened at the country, regional and multilateral level. Once needs have been identified, donors and agencies must improve their ability to respond. In particular, assistance in formulating and financing accompanying measures could help to make regional integration an effective building block for the multilateral trading system. At the forthcoming September Development Committee Meeting, strengthening support for regional, sub-regional and cross-border needs will be discussed.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen the following functions in relation to regional, sub-regional and cross-border issues:
 - diagnosis of needs;
 - costing of projects;
 - preparation of project proposals; and
 - the coordination of donor response, including brokering and co-financing of needs that at present are difficult to finance through country-based processes, (e.g., cross-border infrastructure and policy-integration projects).
- Assign responsibility for these functions. In doing so, priority should be given to improving and strengthening existing mechanisms, including those at the multilateral and regional level, before considering a new mechanism. In exploring the most efficient solution, the conclusions from the discussions at the forthcoming Development Committee should be taken into account. Any solution should involve all relevant stakeholders and give priority to existing regional integration programmes that lack funding.
- Explore the merits of establishing a Regional Aid-for-Trade Committee, comprising sub-regional and regional organizations and financial institutions, to oversee the implementation of the sub-regional and regional dimensions of Aid for Trade, to report on needs, responses and impacts, and to oversee monitoring and evaluation.

F.5.3 Global level

A number of tasks in relation to Aid for Trade are best performed at the global level. These include:

Data collection. Lack of empirical data has made it difficult to examine the relationship between policies related to trade and development performance. Better data and statistics are a precondition for better understanding the process of globalization and its impact, and for determining priorities for development cooperation.

Knowledge creation and sharing. Dissemination of Aid-for-Trade evaluation results, development of best practices and guidelines, and facilitation of information sharing, involving all relevant actors, needs to be improved at the global level, in order to assure efficient use of Aid-for-Trade funds.

Channeling donor funding. Some donors might wish to direct Aid-for Trade funds through multilateral channels, which would allow them to support Aid for Trade without having to build their own institutional capacity in this area and without getting involved at country level. This could include providing support for processes similar to the IF for non-LDC IDA-only countries.

Matching. While a clearing-house function should in most cases be performed at the country and the regional level, sessions dedicated to specific themes and groups of countries could be periodically organized to provide a platform for donors and developing countries to discuss specific gaps which may occur in the implementation of Aid for Trade. One important function could be to connect outstanding Trade-Related Assistance (TRA) needs to donors willing to contribute to their fulfillment.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen the following functions in relation to global issues:
 - the collection and analysis of data on trade policies and their impact, the facilitation of knowledge sharing, and the development of guidelines. Funding for such activities needs to be secured;
 - provision of information on existing Aid-for-Trade instruments and expertise; and
 - matching and brokering unfunded TRA-needs and available donor funding for such projects and programmes.
- Assign responsibility for these functions. In doing so, priority should be given to improving and strengthening existing mechanisms before considering the establishment of a new clearing house at the global level.

F.6 Strengthening monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluating progress is essential in building confidence that increased Aid for Trade will be delivered and effectively used. It will also provide strong incentives to both donors and recipients to advance the Aid-for-Trade agenda. It is important to emphasize the need for concrete and visible results on the ground. All the providers of Aid for Trade and the recipient countries have the responsibility to report on progress and results.

Monitoring. In recipient countries, monitoring should cover trade mainstreaming in national strategies, such as PRSPs, the identification of priority needs, donor responses, progress in implementing trade-related projects and programmes as well as the impact of these efforts. Donors who have made commitments to Aid for Trade should report on the content of such commitments as well as on how they plan to meet the targets for Aid for Trade that they have announced.

Evaluation. Rigorous Aid-for-Trade programme evaluation is particularly important because projected significant increases in Aid for Trade may stretch the delivery capacity of donors and the absorptive capacity of recipients. In-depth country-impact evaluations of Aid-for-Trade programmes should be undertaken to build knowledge and facilitate a results-based approach to delivery. Evaluation of in-country processes should focus, *inter alia*, on progress in mainstreaming trade in national development plans. Evaluations should adopt a results-based approach in order to ensure effectiveness of Aid-for-Trade programmes in relation to the objectives.

Recommendations:

- A global periodic review of Aid for Trade should be convened by a monitoring body in the WTO, based on reports from several different sources, to be published if feasible on the WTO web page:
 - from the country level;
 - from donors;
 - from the regional level;
 - from relevant multilateral agencies; and
 - from the private sector.
- Mechanisms to facilitate reporting to the global monitoring body should be enhanced, including the possibility of a notification process for WTO Members.
- The global periodic reviews should be followed by an annual debate on Aid for Trade convened in the WTO General Council to give political guidance on Aid for Trade.
- Recipient countries should report on the trade mainstreaming in national development strategies, such as the PRSPs, the formulation of trade strategies, Aid-for-Trade needs, donor responses, and implementation and impact. The primary responsibility for reporting to the global monitoring body would lie with the National Aid-for-Trade Committee.
- Donors should report on funds dedicated for Aid for Trade, how they intend to meet their announced Aid-for-Trade targets, the Aid-for-Trade categories covered, and their progress in mainstreaming trade into their aid programming.
- Multilateral and regional actors should be encouraged to report regularly on their Aid-for-Trade activities, progress and impact. When appropriate these actors – including the OECD/DAC – should be asked to assist in providing input and in the organization of the periodic Aid-for-Trade review in the WTO.
- The private-sector should be provided an opportunity to report on their Aid for Trade contributions.
- An assessment of Aid for Trade – either as a donor or as a recipient – should be included in the WTO Trade Policy Reviews.
- Evaluation of country-needs identification, trade mainstreaming in national strategies and PRSPs, donor response and impact on the ground in relation to stated objectives, should be promoted and funded.
- The scope of the Joint WTO/OECD Database should be reviewed in light of the Task Force's definition of Aid for Trade. It should also be updated based on more accurate identification of needs (and the responses) by both providers and recipients of Aid for Trade.

G. HOW AID FOR TRADE CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEVELOPMENT DIMENSION OF THE DOHA-ROUND

Aid for Trade is important in its own right. It should assist developing countries to benefit from increased trade opportunities multilaterally (both from previous rounds and from the anticipated results of the DDA), regionally, bilaterally and unilaterally. The Task Force therefore recommends that Aid for Trade must be operationalized as soon as possible. At the same time, the Task Force affirms that Aid for Trade is a complement, not a substitute, for a successful Doha Round. Increasing trade opportunities for developing countries, in particular the least-developed among them, remains the most important contribution that the WTO can make to development. A successful conclusion of the Round will increase the need for assistance to implement new agreements (e.g., Trade Facilitation), to ease adjustment costs, and to make use of new market access. Aid for Trade is a complement to the Doha Round, but it is not conditional upon its success.

H. NEXT STEPS

These recommendations are directed to many different actors. The Task Force suggests the following next steps:

- urges members to expeditiously implement the recommendations of the Task Force.
- urges the Director-General to use these recommendations in pursuing his mandate to consult on "appropriate mechanisms to secure additional financial resources for Aid for Trade" so that the joint mandate in Paragraph 57 of the Hong Kong Declaration can be implemented in a holistic manner.
- invites the Director-General to communicate these recommendations to relevant agencies and organizations and to urge Ministers at the upcoming Development Committee Meeting in Singapore to give consideration to these recommendations and to encourage the Bank and the Fund to ensure adequate follow-up and to report on the results at the next Autumn meeting.
- invites the Director-General to continue, under his coherence mandate, a dialogue on how recommendations targeted at the agencies could be implemented, including where responsibility for implementation should lie.
- invites the Director-General to establish an ad hoc consultative group to take forward the practical follow-up of these recommendations.
- invites the Director-General to begin examining how to implement the recommendations regarding WTO monitoring of Aid for Trade.
- invites the Director-General to convene, at an appropriate time, a initial review of Aid for Trade, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders.
- suggests, after the completion of the DDA that the secretariat conduct an assessment of associated Aid-for-Trade needs in developing countries, particularly LDCs, and of how Aid for Trade can contribute to the development dimension of the DDA.

Annexes:

Paris Principles
Joint WTO/OECD Trade Capacity Building Database
Paragraph 57 of the Hong Kong Declaration
