



Regional Training of Economic Journalists on
'Trade, Climate Change and Food Security'

Organized by
South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE)
Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS)

In collaboration with
Oxfam Novib, UNESCAP and Commonwealth Secretariat

4-5 July 2013, *Club Palm Bay Hotel, Marawila, Sri Lanka*

Background Note

Trade

It is often argued that South Asia has the potential to become the engine of global economic growth. In fact, the region has experienced a long period of economic growth averaging 6 percent a year over the past 20 years. However, the region continues to suffer from a severe poverty crisis. South Asia has the world's largest concentration of poor people—more than 500 million—living on less than \$1.25 a day.

Regional economic cooperation and integration has been identified as a viable route to economic prosperity in South Asia. The region is home to nearly a quarter of the world population. Due to the enormous size of the market, given the close proximity of countries in the region, and the similarity in production structure and culture, increased intraregional trade and investment could foster rapid economic growth and uplift millions out of poverty in South Asia.

But, despite the establishment of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 1985, the SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA) and the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) in 1995 and 2006 respectively, which all aimed to stimulate trade and foster deeper regional cooperation for economic growth and development, South Asia remains the least-integrated region in the world. Though tariffs are being gradually reduced, the cost of trading still remains substantial.

If the region is to achieve deeper integration in trade, it is necessary not only to reduce tariffs, but also to minimize non-tariff barriers (NTBs) such as sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures and other technical barriers to Trade (TBT). There also has to be progress in the trade facilitation front as supply chain constraints are now recognized as a major impediment to export-led growth.

Climate Change and Food Security

Food security and climate change pose key challenges to the world today. Climate change is now a reality, altering agro-ecological conditions which directly affect agriculture and food production. In a world with unsustainable population growth, volatility in agriculture food production is an eminent threat to food security. In addition, agriculture is not only a source of food but equally importantly, a source of income. So, climate change also has indirect implications on economic growth and income distribution.

Now, climate change has globally become central to development and poverty reduction agenda. Although South Asia's contribution to climate change is negligible, the region, which accounts for 23 percent of the world's population and shelters 35 percent of the world's undernourished, is especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to its geographical orientation coupled with high levels of poverty and population density.

The poor in South Asia depend significantly on rain-fed agriculture and live in settlements that are highly exposed to climate variability. Studies show that South Asia is the region that is going to face the greatest yield decline in almost all crops due to climate change. There will be a 14 percent decline in rice production, 44–49 percent in wheat production and 9–19 percent in maize production by 2050 in a climate change scenario relative to the no climate change scenario.

Climate change is expected to add to the severity of food insecurity in South Asia, and make the implementation of the commitments related to ensuring food security further challenging. Along with the direct impact of climate change on food

security, some policies taken in response to climate change—for example, the production and promotion of bio-fuels—may also adversely affect food security.

Trade, Climate Change and Food Security

South Asian countries view trade liberalization as a potential instrument for poverty reduction, ensuring food security and promoting the use of climate friendly technologies, all of which in turn, contribute towards the mitigation of its impact as well as promoting resilience to climate change. But the relationship between trade, climate change and food security has come under increasing attention as the urgency of national, regional and global actions intensifies with predictions of climate change impacts getting ever grimmer. Given the inter-linkages, the need to make trade and environmental sustainability mutually supportive has now been recognized. At the same time, there is an urgent need to ensure food security, in the face of challenges unleashed by climate change and changing paradigm of global and regional trade.

Regional Training of Economic Journalists

Responding to poverty and climate change presents opportunities and challenges for, *inter alia*, international and intra-regional trade, as well as for food security. A clear mapping of the opportunities and challenges within and outside the region is essential to make trade, climate change and food security agendas mutually supportive.

Realizing these opportunities and challenges, South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), together with the Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS), is organizing a regional training of economic journalists aimed to enhance their understanding on trade, climate change and food security issues so that media coverage of these issues is improved. That would lead to greater sensitization of the public and pressure on policy makers and the political leadership to act. The training will cover the following issues:

- Trade and Food Security
- Climate Change
- Trade Facilitation in South Asia
- Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs)
- Services Trade in South Asia
- Least Developed Country Issues
- Role of the Media in strengthening trade, climate change and food security

Date and Venue

The two-day training will take place on 4-5 July 2013 at Hotel Club Palm Bay, Marawila, Sri Lanka.

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