



LALITPUR, Dec 27: Experts have claimed that the World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial held in Nairobi has failed to meet the expectations of South Asian countries.

Addressing a two-day workshop on 'Regional Cooperation on Trade, Climate Change and Food Security in South Asia', organized jointly by South Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE) and Oxfam, in Lalitpur on Sunday, Posh Raj Pandey, chairman of SAWTEE, said that the ministerial, which was largely characterized by the dearth of Doha Development Agenda, and proliferation of mega regional groups and plurilateral agreements, failed to meet the expectation of South Asian countries. "South Asian countries should further deepen South Asian cooperation and work together with other developing countries to revive the Doha Development Agenda," he suggested.

Presenting the outcomes of the 10th WTO Ministerial, Pandey highlighted some of the major expectations of South Asian countries for the Nairobi Ministerial, particularly in agriculture, services, rules of origin (RoO), and other implementation related issues and concerns. Subsequently, he presented some of the major achievements made in the ministerial, which included the commitment to abolish subsidies for farm exports, preferential RoO for Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and implementation of preferential treatment in favor of services and service suppliers of LDCs, among others.

The workshop with overall objective to discuss issues on trade, climate change and food security relevant to South Asia based on the experience and outcomes of studies conducted by SAWTEE also focused on building a common understanding and strategy for mutual cooperation in South Asia on the issues of trade, climate change and food security.

Starting the deliberations of the workshop, Hiramani Ghimire, executive director of SAWTEE, briefed about the developments in the ministerial, the 21st Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21) and the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Likewise, chairing the opening session, Pushpa Raj Rajkarnikar, chairman of Institute for Policy Research and Development (IPRAD), stressed the need to explore ways to ensure that South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), as a regional bloc, can serve the common goal of deepening regional cooperation in South Asia. He called for a common South Asian agenda in multilateral forums like WTO.

Speaking in the session, L Savithri, Director of SAARC Secretariat, urged South Asian countries to come together for a greater regional integration in South Asia and stressed the need for putting aside political issues.

In yet another session titled 'Overcoming Hunger in South Asia: Case of South Asian Food Supply Chain', former vice chairman of National Planning Commission (NPC), Jagadish Chandra Pokharel, highlighted the need for increasing agricultural productivity with the use of appropriate technologies for overcoming hunger in South Asia.

Similarly, in the session 'Agriculture investment in South Asia: Trends, Opportunities and Challenges,' former member of NPC Hari Krishna Upadhyaya stressed the need for increased investments in agriculture sector in South Asian countries.

Altogether 40 stakeholders, including policymakers, from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are participating in the workshop that will conclude on Monday.

- See more at: <http://www.myrepublica.com/economy/story/33773/wto-ministerial-failed-to-meet-expectation-of-south-asia.html#sthash.1CmoUnWw.dpuf>