



Bridges Weekly Trade News Digest

Weekly trade news from a sustainable development perspective

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LEAD STORIES

Top Obama Trade Official Stresses Need for Openness, Doha Deal

The Obama administration will reject protectionism and pursue negotiated trade liberalisation including an agreement in the stalled Doha Round of WTO talks, the new US trade representative announced last week.

In his first detailed policy speech since taking office in March, Ron Kirk stressed that open trade would be essential to domestic economic recovery. The US must resist the temptation to turn inward, he said, noting that despite the high media profile given to trade-related job losses, "the truth is that jobs do come when trade policy is done right."

He outlined the principles that are to underpin the administration's commercial policy: support for open trade and the rules-based trading system; assistance to American workers harmed by international competition; concluding a Doha Round deal and addressing unratified bilateral trade accords; and greater public scrutiny of Washington's trade policy processes.

Kirk was critical of US trade policy in recent years, saying that, to many Americans, it "lacked rhyme or reason." Enforcement of existing obligations was neglected; inadequate labour and environmental protections allowed other countries to undercut US producers. The complaints echoed those expressed by many in the Democratic Party about the George W. Bush administration's trade policies. Kirk promised to use "all the tools in the USTR's toolbox," including WTO dispute settlement, to go after policies that harm US exports.

Nevertheless, the overall tenor of his remarks seemed to confirm suggestions that President

Obama is stepping back from trade-sceptic rhetoric he occasionally employed on the campaign trail. Earlier in the week, Kirk had told journalists in Washington that it may not be necessary to re-negotiate the environmental and labour rules in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), according to a report from Reuters. Obama himself has publicly questioned the wisdom of re-opening NAFTA at this time, suggesting that it could discourage trade when precisely the opposite is necessary.

Call for Doha accord

Kirk, who was speaking at Georgetown University in Washington, was particularly emphatic about the importance of strengthening the global rules-based trading system, notably through an accord in the Doha Round trade talks.

“President Obama and I are committed to a successful conclusion of Doha,” he said, calling the round a “once-in-a generation opportunity to forge a strong framework for the future of global trade.” He announced that the administration would “in the coming weeks” signal how it thought the struggling negotiations could be moved forward, and that he would be exchanging ideas with the US’s trading partners on how to do so.

In substantive terms, the Obama administration largely shares its predecessor’s prescription for what is necessary to secure a Doha deal: more market-opening concessions by larger developing countries.

It remains to be seen how this will fall on emerging market ears; while many of them would agree with Kirk’s call for ‘levelling the playing field’ in trade relations, they may not share his view on the direction of the current tilt.

“The World’s poorest developing nations have a special place in the Obama trade agenda,” Kirk said. Successful preference schemes, technical assistance, and trade capacity building would help least-developed countries harness trade for growth, he said, and ultimately create new markets for US exports.

With regard to three bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) that were concluded by the Bush administration but have yet to be approved by Congress, Kirk said that there was “strong bipartisan support” for the FTA with Panama, suggesting that it could be put to a vote once labour and tax-related issues are resolved. He also promised action and dialogue on more controversial accords with Colombia and Korea. The former has been bogged down in some lawmakers’ concerns that the Colombian government has not done enough to reduce violence against union leaders, the latter has been held up by disagreements on automotive and agricultural trade.

Kirk also held out the possibility of negotiating new deals at some point in the future.

Openness, transparency stressed

In keeping with broader goals set out the Obama administration, Kirk promised greater transparency and inclusiveness in the trade policymaking process. He argued that this would result in deals that would find it easier to win support in Congress, and would restore public confidence in the benefits of trade.

“We are seeking to understand what our critics want – on both sides of the aisle.” He invited input from both proponents and sceptics of open markets on how trade policy could contribute to prosperity. “We will be responsive where we can, and we will always be respectful when we disagree.”

Opposition brewing within party

Any moves by Obama to pursue further trade liberalisation are likely to run into opposition from within his own party.

A number of Democratic members of Congress have rejected the Bush administration’s bilateral trade deals, and campaigned last fall for changes to – if not an outright withdrawal from – NAFTA. One of them, Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown, told The Hill newspaper that he was disappointed to hear that the White House no longer wished to re-negotiate NAFTA. “The president needs to

understand there is strong opposition to more-of-the-same trade deals.”

Maine Representative Mike Michaud criticised the administration’s pledge to find a way forward on agreements with Panama and Colombia. “People are furious about these trade agreements,” he said on the House floor last week. “During an economic downturn, do we really want to pass Bush-negotiated free trade agreements?”

The Wall Street Journal reported that Brown may table legislation in the Senate that would require all pending trade deals to be put on hold until a non-partisan study of existing trade policies could be carried out.

A divide on bilateral trade deals would not be new to the Democratic Party. In 1993, Bill Clinton’s administration relied on Republican votes to secure Congress’ approval of NAFTA, over the opposition of a majority of House Democrats.

ICTSD reporting; “Intraparty trade war brews,” THE HILL, 21 April 2009; “Lawmaker Moves to Delay Free-Trade Pacts,” WALL STREET JOURNAL, 22 April 2009; “In first speech since taking post, Ron Kirk again pushes for expanded global trade,” DALLAS MORNING NEWS, 24 April 2009; “No need to renegotiate NAFTA to improve it: USTR,” REUTERS, 20 April 2009.

IN BRIEF

String of Pork Bans Follow Swine Flu Outbreak

Six countries have moved to implement bans on pork products from Mexico and parts of the US as global swine flu infections continue to rise. But critics in the two countries argue that the bans are unfounded, and health officials agree the illness cannot be contracted by eating pork.

Since it was first detected in Mexico last month, swine influenza (A/H1N1) infections have spread around the globe to countries including the US, Canada, Germany, Spain, and New Zealand. The

US confirmed its first swine flu-related death on 29 April.

Citing public health and safety concerns, Russia, China, the Philippines, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Ecuador have implemented bans on Mexican and US pork or pork products.

China, which imposed an immediate ban on pork from Mexico and three US states on 27 April, insists that a ban is necessary to rule out any risk of experiencing a situation similar to the 2003 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak. According to a joint statement from the Ministry of Agriculture and the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection, and Quarantine, any shipments already in transit would be tested for the virus before entry.

Russia, a major market for US meat exports, has implemented a more aggressive ban. In addition to implementing a ban on pork products from Mexico and several Latin American and Caribbean countries, Rosselkhnadzor – Russia’s veterinary watchdog – has now banned imports of all types of livestock and meat products from Texas, Kansas, California, New York and Ohio.

In 2008, US meat producers exported US\$836 million worth of poultry to Russia, US\$436 million worth of pork products and US\$75 million worth of beef.

Under WTO rules, health and safety bans such as these must be supported by scientific evidence. The US Trade Representative’s office was quick to point out that the current bans have not met these requirements.

“Restrictions on US pork or pork products or any meat products from the United States resulting from the recent outbreak do not appear to be based on scientific evidence and may result in serious trade disruptions without cause,” the office of the USTR said in a statement.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and other bodies have confirmed that the virus is not transmitted through consumption of infected meat.

The World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), a Paris-based intergovernmental organisation, released a statement saying that human cases of the flu do not justify import bans on pigs.

“There is no evidence that this virus is transmitted by food,” the OIE statement said. “Currently, only findings related to the circulation of this virus in pigs in zones of countries having human cases would justify trade measures on the importation of pigs from these countries.”

Analysts are predicting a global drop in demand for pork products as consumers shy away from products that could be connected to the illness. In an effort to assuage fears over eating pork, a US farm group has mounted a campaign to rename the virus ‘North American influenza’.

“Meat export bans could seriously hurt trade-USTR,” REUTERS, 27 April 2009; “Pork Industry Fights Concerns Over Swine Flu,” NEW YORK TIMES, 28 April 2009; “China bans pork imports from Mexico, parts of US, AFP,” 27 April 2009; “US slams Russian moves to block meat imports,” Associated Press, 29 April 2009; “1st swine flu death reported in U.S. as worldwide numbers rise,” CBC NEWS, 29 April 2009.

World Bank Chief Scolds G20 Leaders for Backsliding on Protectionism

World Bank President Robert Zoellick issued a stern warning to world leaders last week, urging them to follow through on their commitments to keep their borders open to international trade.

“We need to be ever-vigilant that whether it is financing, instruments, or policy prescriptions, we deliver on our commitments and are held accountable for doing so,” Zoellick said. “As the recession deepens, leaders will be under growing pressure to protect home markets. Such retreats behind barriers will only make the economic crisis worse.”

Zoellick noted that G20 leaders meeting in London earlier this month had pledged to refrain from imposing any obstacles to international commerce flows. But in the three weeks that have passed since the 2 April summit, nine of the 20 nations in that group either have implemented or are considering putting in place new measures to restrict trade, Zoellick said.

“That’s almost half the G-20 member states,” Zoellick said.

A fact sheet released by the World Bank’s press office accused G20 members Argentina, Brazil, the European Union, India, Russia and the United States of implementing trade-restricting measures – specifically, anti-dumping duties and safeguard duties – since the 2 April summit in London.

But the World Bank noted that, over the same period, several countries had taken steps to open their borders to trade: South Korea has begun accepting imports of US beef; Japan has lifted a ban on Chilean pork and ended a punitive import duty on Korean computer chips; and India has eliminated import duties on sugar and soybean oil.

In his address to reporters, Zoellick also called attention to the potential human impacts of the downturn, noting that the Asian Crisis of the late 1990s led to an upswing in anemia among pregnant women in Thailand and a decrease in the average weight of children under the age of three in Indonesia. During such times, it is critical to ensure that adequate safety net programmes are in place, Zoellick said.

Indeed, the World Bank has stressed that the effects of the economic crisis will likely be most acute in developing countries, which will be hard hit by declines in foreign aid, income from exports, remittances sent home from citizens who have moved abroad.

In Africa, economic growth will slow to 2.9 percent this year, down from 4.9 percent in 2008, according to the World Bank. The effects of that slide will be far-reaching.

“You don’t talk about an increase in infant mortality when there is a drop in growth in Europe and the United States, but in Africa,

where people are living on that margin, that fall in growth could lead to an additional 700,000 infants failing to reach their first birthday," Shanta Devarajan, the World Bank's chief economist for Africa told reporters last week, according to Reuters.

ICTSD reporting; "Africa could be worst hit by the crisis," REUTERS, 22 April 2009.

Leaders Stress Importance of Trade Facilitation amid Downturn

Developing countries, though far from the world's major financial centres, are being hit hard by the declines in aid, investment and export revenues triggered by the ongoing economic crisis. Amid the downturn, world leaders are calling attention to trade facilitation – which the WTO defines as "the simplification and harmonisation of international trade procedures" – arguing that it could be critical to helping developing country economies emerge from the current crisis.

Speaking at a meeting on trade facilitation last week, EU Trade Commissioner Catherine Ashton called for the international community to help Africa's small and emerging enterprises reach larger markets abroad.

"Business is telling us that trade facilitation needs to be put squarely on the political top table," Ashton said at the conference, which met in Rome on 22 April. "There is a need for simpler trade procedures so as to reduce delays, cut costs, improve the services offered to consumers, and even get into overseas markets in the first place."

Africa's trade potential is being stifled by inefficiencies and red tape, Ashton said, noting that gains from trade facilitation could be found through simpler customs rules and easier transit for goods. For governments, that means simplified customs procedures that save money and improve levels of control. Ashton said that the EU has sought to progressively dismantle barriers to trade and stressed that the bloc considers such policies integral to its development strategy.

Under the WTO's Aid for Trade Initiative, the EU provides 2.7 billion euros to Africa each year to be put toward improving infrastructure, meeting health and safety standards and facilitating the development of markets in the region. The EU is also a major funder of the so-called North-South corridor, a massive project aimed at improving trade infrastructure along a large swath of the African continent reaching from South Africa to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see Bridges Weekly, 1 April 2009, <http://ictsd.net/i/news/bridgesweekly/44514/>).

Speaking at an event in the Zambian capital Lusaka earlier this month, WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy called the corridor project "a commendable example of how to put together all the elements" needed to foster trade. "Making trade possible is one thing; making it happen is quite another," he said.

At the WTO, where talks on trade facilitation were officially launched in 2004, Members are working to clarify three articles of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) 1994: freedom of transit for goods from other Member states, trade-related fees and formalities, and transparency in the regulation and administration of trade regulations. The mandate for the negotiations specifies that developing and least-developed countries will not be obliged to implement future trade facilitation obligations unless they receive the technical assistance necessary to do so.

The negotiating group on trade facilitation was scheduled to meet at WTO headquarter in Geneva this week.

ICTSD reporting.

Ag Ministers Say Food Security Should be High on the International Agenda

Agricultural ministers from the Group of 8 major world economies met for the first time in Italy last week to highlight the problem of food prices and

limit the impact of food emergencies. Farm leaders from the G14, a group of developed and developing countries concerned with agriculture, met ahead of the G8 farm summit to try to inform the process.

Last week's gathering is intended to set the stage for the summit of G8 heads of state that is set to be held in July, also in Italy. The ongoing food crisis is expected to play an important role in that meeting.

The meeting of farm leaders from the G14 – which is made up of China, the Czech Republic, Brazil, Egypt, India, Mexico and South Africa in addition to the G8 countries, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the UK and the US – attempted to broaden the G8 discussion to include considerations of how countries outside the group might be affected by its members' policies.

In an open letter, the G14 farm leaders called on Italy, the host of the upcoming summit of G8 heads of state, to ensure the meeting addressed the livelihoods of farmers, the need for increased investment in agriculture, the importance of mitigating market volatility and climate change, and better organisation of farmers in the market.

The G8 agriculture ministers affirmed the importance of those issues and called on their heads of state to recognise at the July summit that “agriculture and food security are at the core of the international agenda.”

US Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, who attended the meetings, noted that “agriculture increases the amount of trade,” and in turn boosts the amount of food available to everyone. Vilsack also commented that the meeting presented an opportunity to “bolster the economy of developing countries,” insofar as agricultural exports can create wealth that is then used to build the rest of the economy.

According to WTO notifications for 2006, the US provided nearly US\$60 billion in total agricultural support, or on average more than US\$35,000 per farmer. Critics have argued that such levels of support undermine rural development and distort

trade for countries that cannot afford to provide such funds to their farmers.

“Agriculture Ministers must recognise that solving the food crisis is about helping farmers in poor countries stay afloat in these difficult times – not increasing food production in rich countries,” said Chris Leather, Senior Food Advisor, Oxfam International, after the meeting.

Although the statement made by G8 agriculture ministers is not binding, it signals an important shift in focus towards agriculture after a long period of neglect. The final document issued by the group emphasised the need for concerted action in the current financial crisis on climate change, trade distorting agricultural policies, and investment in agricultural production.

“Close to one billion people are currently suffering from hunger around the world and the G8 has a role to play in promoting comprehensive solutions,” said Alexandra Spielloch, of the Institute of Agriculture and Trade Policy. “But this weekend, the G8 failed to shift course from economic policies that have undermined the food security of many developing countries.”

The first G8 farm summit provided an important recognition of the current problems in global agricultural production. The outcome of the July meeting will test the group's commitment to improving global food security and providing support for farmers and producers.

ICTSD reporting.

WTO IN BRIEF

ACP Countries Slam Proposed Changes to EU Banana Tariffs

African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries have spoken out against proposed changes to the EU's banana tariff regime, which they say would harm their exporters.

“We are very disappointed by our partner the European Commission because they are

sacrificing development to trade liberalisation," said Gerhard Siwat, the Surinamese ambassador. "We quite often have the feeling that the European Commission does not understand what partnership means," he told a press conference in Brussels on 6 April.

EU banana import policies have been the subject of a decade-long row at the WTO, pitting Brussels against several Latin American banana producers and the US. At issue is the EU's current import regime: a 176 euros/tonne tariff on bananas from most-favoured nation (MFN) suppliers, alongside a 775,000 tonne duty-free import quota reserved for ACP states, many of which are former European colonies.

Latin American countries have long insisted that this import regime illegally discriminates in favour of bananas from ACP countries and violates WTO rules on quantitative restrictions. The WTO's Dispute Settlement Body has supported such claims, and Brussels is now under pressure to revise its policies.

To that end, the EU proposed in February to lower the current tariffs of 176 euros per tonne to 114 euros per tonne by 2019. That offer marked a slight shift from a tentative deal that was tabled last summer, in which the EU committed to reaching the 114 euro mark three years earlier, in 2016. But that deal fell through when high-level trade talks collapsed in Geneva at the end of July.

The new proposal is based on the same approach, except that the tariff, after an initial decline, would be frozen at 136 euros per tonne from 2011 to 2014. Gradual reductions would then resume until 2019.

In exchange for such tariff reductions, the EU has reportedly called on the several Latin American countries that have challenged the bloc's banana tariffs at the WTO to abandon those disputes. But Ecuador, which has led the charge against the EU's current tariff regime, has already rejected that request. "There is no way we will drop the complaints," Fander Falconi, Ecuador's foreign minister, said last week.

ACP countries are also unsatisfied with the proposal. Siwat of Suriname claimed that,

according to a preliminary estimate, the deal that has been put forward would lead to a revenue loss of at least 350 million euros for ACP banana exporters between 2009 and 2016.

As compensation for such losses, the EU has said it is prepared to offer roughly 100 million euros in aid for the period 2010-2013, but ACP countries say they would need more.

"This helping hand they are offering us is clearly insufficient; 100 million doesn't even scratch the surface of the needs of our banana growers," said Federico Alberto Cuello Camilo, ambassador for the Dominican Republic.

ICTSD reporting; "ACP nations oppose EU banana tariff cut plans," AFP, 7 April 2009; "Ecuador rejects EU call to drop WTO bananas suit," INFOMEDIA, 22 April 2009.

US Delays 'Carousel' Sanctions in EU Beef Controversy

Amid strong pressure both at home and abroad, US Trade Representative Ron Kirk agreed in a telephone conversation with his EU counterpart on 22 April to delay for two weeks the start of controversial sanctions intended to strike back against Brussels' ban on imports of hormone-treated beef. The announcement of the delay came just one day before the retaliatory measures were scheduled to take effect.

"The United States will delay the trade action until May 9, to provide a little more time to negotiate a settlement with the EU," the USTR said in a 22 April release. "The EU has demonstrated seriousness in their efforts to solve this problem, and two additional weeks should be sufficient to establish whether we can address the remaining issues successfully."

In 1999, the WTO granted Canada and the US permission to retaliate against the EU ban with punitive tariffs. The US was authorised to sanction the European bloc US \$116.8 million annually, and has maintained tariffs on a number of mostly agricultural products for nearly a decade.

Yet as both parties continue to argue the legitimacy of their cause, and in light of unclear guidance from the global trade body, the status of the sanctions remains unclear.

In particular, an October 2008 Appellate Body ruling granted the EU the authority to continue the ban on hormone-treated beef while allowing the US to continue its sanctions – a decision that left both sides claiming victory (see BRIDGES Weekly, 23 October 2008, <http://ictsd.net/i/news/bridgesweekly/31644/>).

But the dispute intensified in January when the outgoing Bush administration announced the imminent enactment of rotating tariffs on EU goods that would be subject to change every six months (see BRIDGES Weekly, 21 January 2009, <http://ictsd.net/i/news/bridgesweekly/38184/>). The change was immediately met with strong criticism from EU leaders, who decried the ‘carousel’ sanctions as illegal.

At the same time, business leaders on both sides of the Atlantic increased pressure for a resolution. In the United States, more than 60 Chicago-area restaurant owners protested an expected 100 percent tariff on popular Italian mineral water, while earlier this year French farmers delivered a free wheel of Roquefort cheese to the US embassy in Paris, denouncing an expected 300 percent tariff on the pungent product.

This is the second delay for the sanctions, which were originally scheduled to take effect on 23 March but which the Obama administration pushed back to 23 April.

The 22 April phone call between Kirk and EU Trade Commissioner Catherine Ashton signalled that one of the oldest WTO disputes may be approaching a mutually agreeable conclusion.

“We are both aware that this is a difficult issue that affects businesses and consumers in both the European Union and the United States. We want to overcome those difficulties, and we believe that a solution is within reach that will benefit both sides,” Ashton said.

“This gives us the chance to avoid a crisis that would lead to harmful sanctions as well as more litigation at the World Trade Organisation. Together we can find a positive and lasting solution to this issue, and we will continue our close cooperation on other outstanding issues in the future,” she added.

ICTSD reporting; “US agrees to postpone duty hikes in beef hormone row: EU,” AFP, 23 April 2009; “US delays tariffs on Italian mineral water, other products,” Chicago Tribune, 22 April 2009; “French farmers raise stink over U.S. tariff on Roquefort cheese,” CBC News, 23 January 2009.

EVENTS & RESOURCES

Events

If you would like to submit an event, please email bridges_weekly@ictsd.ch.

Coming up: 30 April- 6 May

4-5 May 2009, Geneva, Switzerland. ANNUAL MEETING OF THE GLOBAL NETWORK OF EXPORT-IMPORT BANKS AND DEVELOPMENT FINANCE INSTITUTIONS (G-NEXID). Preceded by a seminar discussing the global financial crisis, this seminar will discuss the current global trade and financial environment and its impact on the South-South economies and identify strategies to cope with the impact of the crisis through enhanced cooperation amid South-South financial institutions. Lessons learned at the seminar will facilitate the process of charting the future plan of action and activities of the Global Network of Export-Import Banks and Development Finance Institutions (G-NEXID). Participants will include individuals from export-import banks, development-finance institutions, multilateral organisations and international organisation. For more information please visit <http://www.unctad.org/Templates/meeting.asp?intItemID=2068&lang=1&m=17293>.

4-8 May, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. WORKSHOP FOR LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES ON THE FOURTH NATIONAL REPORT. The purpose of the workshop is to facilitate the

finalisation and submission of the fourth national report under The Convention on Biological Diversity, for the purpose of conserving biological diversity, by reviewing draft chapters or reports prepared by some least developed countries, mostly from Africa. The workshop also aims to strengthen national capacities for monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Convention, through promoting exchange of national experiences in preparing national reports and introducing relevant tools and best practices. Workshop participants will include officials or experts from least developed countries responsible for the preparation of the fourth national report, as nominated by their national focal point for the convention, as well as resource persons selected for their expertise and experience in supporting the preparation of national reports as well as monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Convention, including development and use of indicators for monitoring and reporting. For more information please visit <http://www.cbd.int/doc/?meeting=4NRCBW-LDC-01>.

4-15 May 2009, New York City, United States. SEVENTEENTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. The Commission on Sustainable Development's (CSD) two-year implementation cycle will focus on identifying policy options to advance implementation in relation to the thematic cluster issues of agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. CSD 17 will build on the "review" year discussions on the thematic cluster during CSD 16 in May 2008. Delegates will also draw on their discussions of the cluster during the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for CSD 17, which convened in February 2009. In addition to negotiations, CSD 17 will include a high-level segment, and a Partnerships Fair, Learning Centre and side events. For more information please visit http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/csd/csd_csd17.shtml

WTO Events

An updated list of forthcoming WTO meetings is posted http://www.wto.org/meets_public/meets_e.pdf.

Please bear in mind that dates and times of WTO meetings are often changed, and that the WTO does not always announce the important informal meetings of the different bodies. Unless otherwise indicated, all WTO meetings are held at the WTO, Centre William Rappard, rue de Lausanne 154, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland, and are open to WTO Members and accredited observers only.

29-30 April	General Council
30 April	Committee on Import Licensing
6 May	Committee on Safeguards
6+8 May	Trade Policy Review – Solomon Islands
7 May	Committee on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures

Other Upcoming Events

11 May, Geneva, Switzerland. DEBATE LAMY-DE SCHUTTER; SEMINAR ON THE GLOBAL LAND GRAB AND HUMAN RIGHTS. This debate will feature Pascal Lamy, Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), and Olivier De Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food. The experts will debate whether trade liberalisation is helping or hampering the realisation of the right to food. The event is organised jointly by the City of Geneva, and 3D → Trade – Human Rights – Equitable Economy. It will take place in the Palais Eynard at 18.30 on 11 May, and will be webcast on the websites of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and of the WTO. The debate will be open to the public and is a part of Open Doors to the Palais Eynard – conferences, debates, exhibitions series. For more information on this event please visit <http://www.3dthree.org/en/index.php>.

13-15 May, Cyprus. FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING. This conference, organised by the Wessex Institute of Technology, addresses the subject of regional development. It has become apparent that planners, environmentalists, architects, engineers, policy makers and

economists have to work together in order to ensure that planning and development can meet our present needs without compromising the ability of future generations. In recent years, there has been in many countries, an increase in spatial problems that has led to planning crises. Planning problems are often connected with uneven development, deterioration of the quality of urban life and destruction of the environment. The increasing urbanisation of the world coupled with the global issues of environmental pollution, resources shortage and economic restructuring are leading to major crises. For more information please visit <http://www.wessex.ac.uk/09-conferences/sustainable-development-2009.html>.

19 May 2009, London, United Kingdom. SIXTH ANNUAL EMERGING MARKETS TRADE & POLITICAL RISK CONFERENCE. This conference will be held in London on May 19, at the Willis Building in Lime Street. The event will be especially relevant this year, given the ongoing shrinkage of export and trade finance liquidity for emerging markets, and will offer a window to decision-makers to ascertain the strength and depth of the credit and political risk insurance now available to companies operating internationally. For more information please see <http://www.exporthgroup.com/conferences/6th-Annual-Emerging-Markets-Trade-&Political-Risk-Conference-170/>.

28-29 May, Montreal, Canada. TREATY REGIMES IN PRACTICE: DOMESTIC IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. Sponsored by the CISDL with the McGill University's Faculty of Law, Hydro Quebec and Oppenheimer Research Chairs and the International Law Association, this event will focus on recent trends and best practices in domestic laws to implement the sustainable development objectives of international treaty regimes. Dialogue in this event will also focus on how these experiences are shaping new rules and institutions in the treaty regimes themselves. Individuals from international environment, development, human rights and law experts, academics, professionals and students are encouraged to register. This symposium features a wide range of keynote speakers. For more information please visit

http://www.cisd.org/pdf/poster_symposium2009_screen.pdf.

17-19 June, Venice, Italy. 2009 INTERNATIONAL ENERGY WORKSHOP. This workshop, jointly sponsored by the Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change (CMCC) and the International Centre for Climate Governance, represents an informal network of analysts actively working on international energy issues. The IEW provides a venue for scholars and researchers to compare quantitative energy projections and to understand the reasons for diverging views of future developments. The workshop is structured with one plenary session per day, each one hosting two key-note speeches of international experts of the research field. Then, three parallel sessions will be held at each time slot with 3 or 4 presentations each. The aim is to select about 85 papers out of the applications. For more information please visit <http://www.iccgov.org/iew2009/2-0.htm>.

Resources

THE ASIAN NOODLE BOWL: IS IT SERIOUS FOR BUSINESS? By Masahiro Kawai, the Asian Development Bank Institute, April 2009. This study focuses on the impact of free trade agreements (FTAs) on East Asia's business between those who view the agreements as a harmful Asian 'noodle bowl'—i.e., overlapping regional trade agreements—of trade deals and others who see net beneficial effects in terms of regional liberalization and a building block to multilateral liberalisation. A lack of enterprise-level data has made it difficult to resolve the debate. This paper seeks to address the critical question of whether the Asian noodle bowl of multiple overlapping FTAs is harmful to business activity, particularly for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The surveys suggest that the Asian noodle bowl does not seem to have severely harmed the region's business activity to date. Use of FTA preferences is higher than expected from previous studies, furthermore a relatively small percentage of responding firms said that multiple rules of origin significantly added to business cost. However, as more FTAs take effect and the complexity of the Asian noodle bowl increases,

the business impact is likely to intensify. Implementation of key policies and closer public-private sector cooperation can help mitigate negative effects and facilitate a more SME-inclusive business response to FTAs. For more information and to access this paper please refer to <http://www.adbi.org/working-paper/2009/04/14/2940.asian.noodle.bowl.serious.business/>.