

BEHIND-THE-BORDER ISSUES

Innovation and IPRs

A contentious aspect of globalization is the protection of intellectual property rights (IPRs). To bring the issues into focus, three highly-debated areas of IPRs will be discussed: (i) the role of patents in spurring innovation, while potentially delaying technology diffusion; (ii) the effect of loose copyright protection on local content development in the publishing, film, and software industries; and (iii) the rationale for the protection and compensation of indigenous knowledge, its impact on the discovery and access to new health technologies, and its relevance to the current IPR system.

Transport and Logistics

Revolutions in transport and logistics are changing the impact of distance on the location of economic activity through a dramatic drop in the costs of transport and communications. This seminar will review the impact of logistical barriers on trade from more remote and poorer areas. The seminar will assess strategies for overcoming these barriers and spreading economic activity beyond port cities. The seminar also will discuss the role of competition and regulation policy in enhancing provision of transport and logistics services, linking these to the post-Doha services liberalization agenda and the role of entry by foreign suppliers.

Energy and Telecommunications

Inadequate infrastructure services are perceived as critical bottlenecks for development. The WTO service negotiations to date suggest that many Asian countries have some reservations in opening up the service sector to international competition. Yet, insufficient competition may negatively impact on the expansion of Asian exports and the attractiveness of Asian economies to private foreign investors. This seminar will discuss the experience of major Asian economies in deregulating and liberalizing the energy and telecommunication sectors and its impact on economic performance.

Financial Services

Opening of financial markets has enormous economic implications. Most Asian countries have made substantial liberalization commitments within the context of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), but the extent of liberalization and the pace of implementation differ widely. The seminar will discuss the progress and issues related to financial sector commitments in selected Asian countries, look into the implications of liberalization, examine the relations between financial services liberalization and capital account liberalization, and make recommendations for developing Asian countries' liberalization strategies.

Trade and Investment

The seminar will delve into the challenges for developing countries from the proposal to link trade and investment issues in the next round of negotiations. Drawing on the literature survey and evidence on the relationship between foreign direct investment and development, this seminar will examine the opportunities and challenges for making such a linkage in the post-Doha agenda. The seminar will present an evaluation of alternative tactics and strategies on trade and investment issues for developing countries in future WTO negotiations.