

THE STOCKHOLM FORUM ON GENDER EQUALITY

SHAPING AN INCLUSIVE TRADE POLICY

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Contributors: Department for International Trade Policy and EU Internal Market
- Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Sweden. Moderator – Anna Stellingner (Swedish National
Board of Trade, Sweden); Rapporteurs – Luisa Michels Kieling and Daria Popova

OVERVIEW

The 11th WTO ministerial meeting acknowledged that inclusive trade policies can contribute to advancing gender equality and women's economic empowerment, which in turn have a positive impact on economic growth and help reduce poverty. The ministers agreed to collaborate on making trade policy more gender-responsive. This session raised awareness of gender aspects in international trade, discussed the latest developments, and considered how international trade and trade policy can promote the advancement of gender equality and ensure that women-owned and women-powered businesses are able to fully participate in the global economy.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Where are we?

- Gender discrimination leads to lower economic growth – resources are not fully utilised as salaries are not based on productivity, but on gender. Hence, gender equality is important for economic growth and the fight against poverty.
- Challenges: 1) Access to credit. In countries where women can't have assets, they have difficulty in accessing credit; 2) SMEs run by women are discriminately perceived as risky, so the lack to credit is reinforced; 3) Public procurement (less than one per cent of this market is supplied by women).
- People don't benefit equally from trade. There's a need to ensure an inclusive trade environment.
- Policy-makers nowadays don't analyse trade agreements' impact on specific segments of the populations, including on women. Nowadays women and girls are invisible in many statistics. There's a risk of having unforeseen negative impacts, which may become social or economic shocks.
- Gender mainstreaming is not seen as a natural part of trade policy for all countries.
- Trade and trade liberalisation can affect equality, and equality can also affect a country's ability to trade.
- Need to recognise that international trade liberalisation can affect men and women differently.
- Free trade is not enough, we need to tackle structural difficulties that harness women from participating in trade.

What are we doing?

- The Buenos Aires Declaration on trade and gender raised the profile of gender on the trade agenda. It was a starting point on the multilateral level.
- The current Swedish feminist foreign policy is aimed at achieving gender equality by eliminating all forms of discriminations against women and girls, also in trade policy area.
- Pushing for increased data and analyses in international trade and trade policy.
- Raising awareness of gender aspects in trade, for example in the WTO.
- Gender chapters in free trade agreements.
- Initiative 'She trades' – trade today is about sustainability and inclusiveness. Based on data, women in business make up half of all SMEs in the world, but only 1 in 5 exporters that are SMEs are women. There are impediments for women participation in international trade. The initiative proposes to connect 1 million women in the international trade market as well as seven global actions to ensure progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Where do we go from here?

- Need for data to be disaggregated by gender to strengthen gender analyses that facilitate the formulation of adequate policy responses.
- Identify barriers that limit women's participation in trade.
- Tools that should be used: 1) Sustainability impact assessment (before every trade agreement starts) and 2) UNCTAD trade and gender toolbox.
- UNCTAD Trade and Gender Toolbox methodology can be adapted to different agreements and different countries, if there is enough and proper data. More data means a greater possibility to analyse the economy.
- Need for gender mainstreaming and gender chapters in trade agreements.
- Trade policies need to be as inclusive as possible. Other national policies are also interrelated, e.g., income distribution, taxation and education. We need to make sure that those who lose out can be protected and have the skills to be a part of it.
- 7 areas/global actions needed for increased gender equality in trade: data (disaggregated data), trade policies, public procurement, private procurement, financial inclusion, ownership rights and capacity building.
- Abolishing structural difficulties for women so that they can benefit from trade through for example international conventions regarding gender and supporting countries to implement them.
- Trade policy needs to use a gender lens.
- The private sector needs to engage by asking who the suppliers are.
- We need to place the trade sector alongside other areas, such as education, health, infrastructure and so on. There is no hierarchy, and all of them have to be synchronised. We need a commitment to leave no one behind.
- A greater access to finance is not enough, we also need to analyse what kind of finance it is and its quality. ■

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