

2020 Trade for Peace Week

Event report: Trade for peace through decent work

2 December 2020

Session 5 of the Trade for Peace Week titled "Trade for Peace through decent job creation" took place in the morning of the 2 December 2020. The session was virtually hosted by the WTO Accession Division and co-organized with the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The moderator, Ms. Roberta Piermartini from the Economic Research and Statistics Division of the WTO, opened the session by emphasizing the need for inclusive trade and more coordination between international organizations (such as the WTO, the ILO and UNDP) to ensure that increased trade contributes to decent jobs creation. She pointed to the crucial role the WTO membership plays in creating a predictable business environment and stable jobs. She introduced the speakers representing two international organizations (ILO, UNDP) and ILO's three constituencies (government, employers, workers).

Ms. Mito Tsukamoto, Chief, Development and Investment Branch, ILO Employment Policy Department, transmitted three key messages. First, that there is an intrinsic link between peace and resilience on one side, and jobs which offer social, economic, and environmental benefits on the other. The ILO has produced a number of policy documents providing guidance to all stakeholders to maximise their contribution to peace and stability (e.g. the most recent one is a handbook on [How to Design, Monitor and Evaluate Peacebuilding Results in Jobs for Peace and Resilience Programmes](#)). Second, jobs for peace and resilience contribute to livelihoods, increase dignity and create a sense of well-being (or interconnectedness). In this regard, she made reference to the adoption in 2017 of the ILO [Recommendation on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience \(N. 205\)](#), the only international normative instrument focusing on the role of employment and decent work in promoting peace, and to the launch of the ILO's [Jobs for Peace and Resilience Flagship Programme](#). She also highlighted the importance of employment-intensive investments. Third, she pointed to the crucial role of cooperation with social partners (namely employers' and workers' organizations) in promoting decent work through trade policies. She concluded by saying that trade can potentially promote peace, but only if decent jobs are created by conducive trade and employment policies and collaboration between the social partners and multilateral organizations.

Mr. Mozammil Shinwari, former Deputy Minister of Commerce and Industry of Afghanistan and Chief Negotiator for WTO Accession, brought concrete examples from his country's experience as a conflict-affected state, and how they used the WTO accession negotiations to protect crucial, employment intensive domestic industries in conflict-critical rural areas while also benefiting from the accession process as an opportunity for trade-facilitating institutional reforms and to attract more foreign investment. He emphasized that in Afghanistan trade is directly linked to job creation, and so is employment to peace.

Mr. Matthias Thorns, Deputy Secretary General of the International Organisation of Employers (IOE), underlined that participation in international trade contributes to better working conditions and higher wages, especially if exporting companies are linked to diversified global value chains.

Mr. Omar Faruk Osman, General Secretary of the Federation of Somali Trade Unions (FESTU), concurred with the presentation of Mr. Shinwari that in conflict-affected countries like Somalia

job creation is key to undermine the appeal of violent extremism. He highlighted that international trade opportunities hold a great promise for countries affected by fragility if they create stable jobs with decent wages. He underlined that the ongoing accession process of Somalia to the WTO holds significant potential to attract more FDI and to help access foreign markets.

Ms. Luisa Bernal, Policy Specialist from the UNDP Geneva, elaborated on the links between conflicts, poverty and economic development, emphasizing the importance of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. She listed structural transformation, the diversification of economies through trade and the creation of decent jobs as essential enablers to help countries get and stay out of conflict.

In her concluding remarks, Ms. Tsukamoto emphasized that in fragile and conflict-affected situations decent work must be central to trade policies, and that further mobilization and building of the private sector is essential in countries facing fragility. She reiterated the importance of the cooperation of international organizations in this regard.

As a follow-up action to the fruitful discussion, the WTO and the ILO agreed to look into deepening, and possibly institutionalizing, their cooperation in the area of trade for peace for decent jobs creation.