

Shree Servansing, Member of the WTO Appellate Body

## Defending Development: The Politics of Developing Country Coalitions at the WTO

Tuesday, 30 October 2018

16.00-18.00

Silva Casa Auditorium, World Trade Institute, University of Bern

Hallerstrasse 6, 3012 Bern, Switzerland

More Info 

*For MILE and TRAIL+ students, this seminar is worth 1.5 ECTS.*

### Seminar Description

The governance of global trade and the shaping of the multilateral trading system during the Uruguay round was essentially dominated by developed countries with little or no participation of developing countries, more particularly the Small and Vulnerable (SVEs) and Least Developed countries (LDCs). The agenda, the negotiating process and the outcome were determined by developed countries, more particularly by the leadership provided by Europe and the US. What resulted was an imbalanced and skewed outcome that did not give adequate attention to developing country perspectives and interests.

The changing dynamics in the global economy with the rise of the emerging economies on the one hand and the greater sensitization of the SVEs and LDCs to the importance of trade in their development process changed the landscape of the trade decision-making process in Geneva. The post Uruguay built-in negotiations and the ensuing Doha Development Round of multilateral trade negotiations were initiated in a new environment where the political leadership of the US and the EU was still essential but could no longer be exclusive. The inability of developed countries to unshackle themselves from this imperative of hegemonic power together with the failure of emerging countries to define this new equilibrium needed in the MTS and the refusal of a "one-size-fits-all" approach by smaller developing countries is what lies behind the crisis in the multilateral trading system today.

Much of the deadlock in the DDA is as much part of political differences as it is of the dynamics of the negotiating process in Geneva where developing countries have through their structured groupings and coalitions been able to plug some of the previous asymmetries of power in the negotiations. A broad array of developing country groupings now dominates the Geneva landscape providing visibility to their existence and enabling the articulation of their views and negotiating positions.

The purpose of this presentation is to explain how developing countries have organized themselves at the WTO to participate in the negotiating process, the basis on which different configurations thrive, their strengths and weaknesses in this endeavor, the coalitions they contract and their contradictions at times, how they muster resources for their existence and how successful have they been in achieving their objectives so far. It is important to realize that a negotiation as the DDA round is both a political and a technical process. Therefore participation and visibility are very important as if you succeed in determining or influencing the agenda, you are also successful in determining or influencing the outcome, an area in which developing countries were absent in the Uruguay round and which they try to remedy in the DDA round. This is why developing countries understood quickly

that while mastery of the technical issues was important, so was the politics of the negotiating process itself. With this in mind the paper will be divided in three sections:

1. How the negotiating processes are structured and how negotiations unfold within these processes
2. What are the developing country groupings and coalitions at the WTO and how do they interface with the negotiating process
3. Some final thoughts about a few lessons on their successes and failures.

## Biography of the Speaker

Shree Baboo Chekitan Servansing is presently serving as WTO Appellate Member. From 2004 to 2012, Mr Servansing was Mauritius' Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva, including the WTO. During his tenure as Permanent Representative, he served on various Committees at the WTO, and chaired the Committees on Trade and Environment, and Trade and Development. He also chaired the Work Programme on Small Economies, the dedicated session on Aid-for-Trade, and the African Group, and was coordinator of the African Caribbean Pacific (ACP) Group.

Mr Servansing previously worked, in various capacities, for the Mauritius Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Mauritius, India and Belgium. During his tenure at the Mauritius Embassy in Belgium, he was intensively involved in the ACP-EU negotiations leading to the Cotonou Agreement and subsequently in the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiations. Mr Servansing also served as the personal representative of the Prime Minister of Mauritius on the Steering Committee of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

In this capacity he was engaged in the strategic formulation of Africa's flagship development framework.

Upon retiring from civil service, Mr Servansing served as the head of the ACP-EU Programme on Technical Barriers to Trade in Brussels from 2012 to 2014. In this position, he was responsible for facilitating the building of capacity among ACP countries in order to enhance their export competitiveness, and improve their Quality Infrastructure to comply with technical regulations. Mr Servansing's experience in trade policy, trade negotiations, and the multilateral trading system spans three decades. He has frequently spoken on international trade issues, and has published numerous papers and articles in Mauritian and foreign journals on a variety of trade-related issues.

Mr Servansing holds an M.A. from the University of Sussex, a Postgraduate Diploma in Foreign Affairs and International Trade from Australian National University, and a B.A. (Hons.) from the University of Mauritius.

Participation is free of charge.