

CREW International Conference

Speaking Notes of Pradeep S Mehta (SG, CUTS International)

Inaugural Session, 18th Nov 2014

Dear Dr Panitchpakdi and Mr Swami, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good morning!

I would like to welcome you all to this important conference on an extremely opportune and relevant project that CUTS has been implementing over the last couple of years. The project is referred to as the CREW project and aims to raise the visibility about and highlight the significance of competition reforms across various organs of developing country governments.

This conference is important because it has been envisaged as a platform for sharing knowledge and experience on key elements of competition reforms gathered from the four project countries – Ghana, India, Philippines & Zambia.

We believe it is opportune and relevant not only from the perspective of the four project countries but also for the larger community of scholars and practitioners with interest on competition policy.

Let me explain, why I think so.

The world has witnessed two remarkable incidents in the last week or so, which are likely to have considerable implications on economic growth and development – globally.

First of all, the ***breakthrough in the discussions between US and India, on the treatment of food security provision at the WTO***. This has turned global attention back on the multilateral trading system (especially the possibilities of a global agreement on Trade Facilitation). This has huge implications on global development, including economies and markets in the developing world (developing and least developed countries).

The second is an event that took place a few days ago not too far from here - in Brisbane, Australia - The G-20 Leaders' Summit. The Leaders have recognized that ***removing obstacles to trade and competition*** is a key ingredient to stimulate growth and boost employment. The G-20 structural reform agenda is focused on investment in infrastructure, trade, competition and employment – a key component of the 5-year Brisbane Action Plan 2014, that was adopted. The leaders have envisaged a partnership between the 'north' and the 'south' to implement this action plan.

These two events highlight the value of competitive markets in the current discourse on global economic governance, especially for stimulating growth and achieving key developmental objectives, worldwide.

CUTS and its partner from across the developing countries of Asia and Africa have worked tirelessly to promote the need for competitive markets in the developing world. The CREW project is another endeavor of CUTS in this area.

You will hear about the findings from the CREW project countries in greater details in the sessions today, and I don't intend to spend too much time on them now.

One of the important lessons that I would like to highlight here, is the focus on the role of the government not only as an able regulator of competition, but also an enabler of the same – especially in key sectors that impact daily lives of people.

CIAT unveiling

Taking the CUTS agenda of helping developing countries appreciate the value of competition, I would like share with you a toolkit that CUTS has recently developed – Competition Impact Assessment Toolkit.

May I request Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi to kindly unveil this toolkit.

This toolkit helps assess competition distortions induced by government policies in the developing world, and we urge you to apply it in your work and practice.

After the book unveiling (declaration of CUTS-ECOWAS MOU)

Before I call Dr. Supachai to address the meeting, I am pleased also to inform you that CUTS has firmed up its work agenda with the ECOWAS Commission and is in a process of signing an MoU with the ECOWAS Commission.

Unfortunately our friends from ECOWAS could not make for the conference due to work exigencies.

Let me thank you once again for making it to this event from near and far – and now call with great honour Dr. Supachai for his address.

After Dr. Supachai's address

We have Mr. Rajesh Swami, First Secretary from the Indian Embassy in Thailand with us. I request Mr. Swami to kindly say a few words.

After Dr. Swami's address

Let me now request our good friend Eiko Kauffmann from GIZ (Germany), one of our development partners for the CREW project to say a few words. Let me also recognize the presence of our other supporter of the CREW project, our friend from DFID (UK) - Tom Ratsakatika.

After Eiko's address

We will now jump straight into the first technical session of the day, as per the agenda of this conference.
