



Trade and Sustainability: Imperatives for India to consider for MC14

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1. Background

The 1994 Marrakesh Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization (WTO), references sustainable development in its Preamble. It identifies the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental, and notes that the ability of each WTO member to address each of these dimensions needs to be enhanced “consistent with their respective needs and concerns at different levels of economic development”.¹ Of these, the WTO Agreements are primarily focused on the economic dimension. Environmental and labour related agreements have emerged under other specialized bodies of the United Nations, which are institutionally better equipped to deal with these issues.

Increasingly, however, both the environmental and labour dimensions are being addressed in either standalone chapters, or under a common chapter on “sustainable development” under bilateral or plurilateral free trade agreements (FTAs). While primarily driven by developed countries, the use of such provisions has proliferated over the years across FTAs. While India traditionally rejected environment and labour as non-trade issues, its recent FTAs with the United Kingdom (UK) and the European Union (EU) have provisions on environment, labour, gender and sustainable development, though these are excluded from the formal dispute settlement mechanism of the trade agreement.

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¹ World Trade Organization. (1995). Marrakesh agreement establishing the World Trade Organization. Preamble, first paragraph: “Recognising their relations in the field of trade and economic endeavour should be conducted with a view to raising standards of living, ensuring full employment and a large and steadily growing volume of real income and effective demand, and expanding the production of and trade in goods and services, while allowing for the optimal use of the world's resources in accordance with the objective of sustainable development, seeking both to protect and preserve the environment and to enhance the means for doing so in a manner consistent with their respective needs and concerns at different levels of economic development.”

² UN. World Commission on Environment and Development. (1987). *Our common future*. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/139811?ln=en&v=pdf>

³ UNGA. (1992). *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development: Agenda 21 (A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1)*. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/170126?ln=en>.

With climate change and environmental sustainability becoming intrinsically linked to economic competitiveness, it is no longer realistic to maintain that environment is a ‘non-trade’ issue. The absence of a globally agreed carbon price, for example, has led to increasing use of carbon border measures. The EU has started implementing its carbon border adjustment measure (CBAM) that subjects imports to pay the price difference in embedded carbon, as a condition for market access. UK’s CBAM is expected to be implemented from next year. Carbon taxes, reporting and traceability related measures are also gradually increasing across developed countries.

Meanwhile, the stand that India continues to take at the WTO is that there cannot be substantive discussion on environment and labour, which are predominantly non-trade issues. India has however, sought to push forward the discussion on how obligations relating to trade in transfer of technology, including on climate friendly technologies, should be advanced in discussions under the WTO’s Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE) and the Working Group on Technology Transfer (WGTT).

With the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC14) fast approaching, this paper outlines the key developments that are taking place at the WTO, and the opportunities and challenges for the issues that India has sought to advance in this regard.

2. Understanding the concept of “Sustainable Development”

“Sustainable development”, a term which resonates almost intuitively with everyone, does not have a legal definition under any international instrument. The essence of this term is perhaps most eloquently captured in a 1987 report of the United Nations (UN) titled “Our Common Future” which noted that “Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”²

Since then, practically every major instrument of international law, has emphasized on the need for sustainable development. The United Nations’ Earth Summit at Rio in 1992 and its ambitious plan of action outlined in Agenda 21, acknowledged the delicate balance between environmental and developmental concerns, as well as the need for international law to evolve to address the same. It also eloquently laid out the various aspects for consideration, including steps for financial and technological collaboration to achieve sustainable development.³

Close on its heels, the 1994 Marrakesh Agreement establishing the WTO, referenced the three dimensions of sustainable development, as explained in the introductory paragraph of this paper.

The discussions over the years culminated in the UN 2030 Agenda for

Sustainable Development, laying down seventeen sustainable development goals (SDGs).⁴ The UN SDG goals recognize that these are integrated and indivisible goals that seek to balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental.

Each of these instruments of international law is endorsed and adopted by majority of the countries in the world, a testament to the fact that “sustainable development” is universally accepted as a given. And yet, the concept of “trade and sustainable development” is fraught with significant difference in approaches, quite starkly between developed and developing countries. Clearly, the reason is not the lack of commitment to “sustainable development”; rather, the differences stem from differing perspectives as regards the right and just manner in which sustainability can be truly achieved.

3. Trade & Sustainability in the WTO Agreements and FTAs

Under the WTO Agreements, environment has traditionally been available as an “exception” to justify inconsistency of a trade measure with WTO obligations, subject to safeguards that aim to ensure that such inconsistent measures are not fronts for protectionist measures, or disguised restrictions on international trade.⁵ Similarly, the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers (TBT) to Trade and Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS), provide right of members to take measures for

specific environmental reasons, and again subject to obligations such as clear criteria and reasons for such actions.

This broad and generic reference to environment, in the context of sustainable development, also recognizes that while the preservation and protection of the environment is an important objective, it will be done in a manner consistent with their respective needs and concerns at different levels of economic development. There is a clear recognition therefore that protection of the environment as an ideal in itself, is not the WTO’s objective, rather its focus is on the overall principle of sustainable development.

The TBT agreement seeks to ensure that product specifications, whether mandatory or voluntary (known as technical regulations and standards), as well as procedures to assess compliance with those specifications (known as conformity assessment procedures), do not create unnecessary obstacles to trade. In its preamble, TBT agreement recognizes countries’ rights to adopt such measures to the extent they consider appropriate — for example, to protect human, animal or plant life or health, or the environment.⁶

The SPS agreement deals with food safety, and human, animal and plant health and safety regulations. It recognizes members’ rights to adopt SPS measures but stipulates that they must be based on a risk assessment, should not create unnecessary obstacles to trade (should be applied only to the extent necessary to protect human, animal or plant life or health), and should not arbitrarily

⁴ UNGA. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development* (A/RES/70/1).

⁵ WTO. (1994). *General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade 1994* (GATT 1994), art. XX(b), (g), Pursuant to these two paragraphs, WTO members may adopt policy measures that are inconsistent with GATT disciplines, but necessary to protect human, animal or plant life or health (paragraph (b)), or relating to the conservation of exhaustible natural resources (paragraph (g)).; WTO (1994), *General Agreement on Trade in Services* (GATS), art. XIV provides for an exception related to environment that is worded similar to Article XX(b).

⁶ WTO. (1994). *Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade* (TBT Agreement).

⁷ WTO. (1994). *Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement)*.

⁸ WTO. (1996). *United States-Standards for Reformulated and Conventional Gasoline*, WT/DS1/AB/R.; WTO. (1998). *United States-Import Prohibition of Certain Shrimp and Shrimp Products*, WT/DS58/AB/R.; WTO. (2001). *United States-Import Prohibition of Certain Shrimp and Shrimp Products-Recourse to Article 21.5 of the DSU*, WT/DS58/AB/RW. WTO. (2007). WTO. (1998). *Brazil-Measures Affecting Imports of Retreaded Tyres*, WTO Doc. WT/DS332/AB/R. WTO. *European Communities-Measures Concerning Meat and Meat Products (Hormones)*, WTO Doc. WT/DS26/AB/R., WT/DS48/AB/R.; WTO. (2001). *European Communities-Measures Affecting Asbestos and Asbestos-Containing Products*, WTO Doc. WT/DS135/AB/R.

⁹ WTO Secretariat. (1997). *Environmental benefits of removing trade restrictions and distortions*. WTO Doc. WT/CTE/W/67. https://www.wto.org/english/forums_e/ngo_e/w67.pdf.

¹⁰ WTO. (1996). *Singapore Ministerial Declaration*. WTO Doc. WT/MIN(96)/DEC. https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/min96_e/wtodec_e.htm.

or unjustifiably discriminate between members where similar conditions prevail.⁷

There have been several prominent disputes at the WTO dealing with the trade and environment interface.⁸ The jurisprudence that has evolved clearly recognizes that:

- WTO law does not exist in clinical isolation of international law and developments, including environmental concerns. However, environmental measures to restrict trade can be adopted only under certain strict conditions.
- Multilateral solutions to environmental issues are the preference; a WTO Member should therefore make serious efforts to negotiate such solutions. If despite such efforts, an agreement cannot be concluded, then unilateral measures for protection of environment may be taken, even outside that country's jurisdiction.
- Adequate scientific evidence and risk assessment lie at the core of any action under the WTO's SPS Agreement which allows for measures to protect human, animal and plant life and health.
- Tests of necessity and availability of less trade restrictive measures need to be applied prior to application of any trade restriction on environmental grounds.

Trade & Sustainability Linkages: Difference in WTO and FTAs

Trade as a vehicle of economic

productivity and growth, relies on the principle of comparative advantage, which is essentially that countries should specialize in production of those goods which they can produce efficiently and economically. Economic efficiency is linked to the cost of production, which in turn is impacted by factors of production such as labor, land and capital, as well as cost of raw materials, consumables and technology. A WTO Secretariat paper from 1997 acknowledged that trade instruments are not the first best policy for addressing environmental problems.⁹ With regard to labour, the WTO Singapore Ministerial Declaration of 1996 noted that the comparative advantage of countries, particularly low-wage developing countries, must in no way be put into question under the WTO agreements.¹⁰

The trend in FTAs is the shift from “environment as an exception” to “environment as an obligation”. Early FTAs entered into by the United States (US), beginning with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, started addressing “environment” and “labour” as side agreements. This has continued to grow in complexity and detailing, and incorporation into the main agreement, including trade sanctions for non-compliance.

Environment and labour provisions in U.S. FTAs can be enforced through the dispute settlement provisions of the FTA itself, including through provisions on trade sanctions in the event any inconsistency is found. In other words, to ensure compliance with a country's own labour or environmental law, U.S. as

a FTA partner has the right to suspend trade obligations or impose higher tariff costs.

The approach in EU's FTAs was initially confined to recommendations of an expert panel which needed to be considered in good faith by a FTA party. However, EU has now aligned its approach with that of U.S. FTAs which emphasize on use of trade sanctions for enforcement of environment, labour and sustainable development obligations in a FTA.¹¹

India has recently agreed to environment, labour and sustainable development obligations in its FTAs with the UK and the EU. While these exclude formal dispute settlement and trade sanctions, they emphasize a consultative process to resolve any potential concerns. Neither of the FTAs directly contest the unilateral environmental measures such as CBAM. The India-UK FTA reportedly has a diplomatic note verbale under which India has ascertained the right to rebalance if the UK CBAM undermines FTA concessions. The FTA with EU appears to acquiesce to EU's CBAM, with the only leeway present being that for accounting for carbon price paid in India, which to begin with is significantly lower than that of EU.

The reason why India's approach in FTAs, and the gradual acceptance of trade and sustainability in FTAs generally, is important for any discussion in the WTO context, is because they provide valuable insights into where the trade and sustainability linkages can mature into the WTO. India's stand in FTAs will also have a bearing on its stand at the

WTO, since it will be difficult to defend a dual approach- of negating trade-environmental linkage at the WTO, while agreeing to this under FTAs.

4. India's approach at the WTO

India has been one of the staunchest opponents to the linkages of trade with environment and labour related issues at the WTO. It has instead taken a focused approach at the WTO on emphasizing the role of trade as a vehicle for transfer of much needed technology to achieve green development.

With particular reference to environment and sustainability issues, WTO Members agreed at the Doha Ministerial Conference to (i) negotiations on a limited set of trade-and-environment topics (paragraph 31) and (ii) instructed the CTE, within its existing terms of reference, to give particular attention to issues like the market-access effects of environmental measures—especially for developing countries (paragraph 32).

India has sought to advance the role of the CTE through several notable submissions in this regard. These include the following: (a) India's proposal before the WGT'TT in 2005¹², (b) a Room Document, co-sponsored by India before the WGT'TT in 2008 entitled "Facilitating Access to Information on Appropriate Technology Sourcing-A step to increase flows of technology to developing countries"¹³ (c) a joint proposal co-sponsored by India before the CTE in 2011,¹⁴ and (d) communication on "Concerns on emerging trends of using

¹¹ European Commission. (2022). *Commission reveals new approach to trade agreements to promote green and just growth*. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_3921

¹² WTO. (2025). *Working Group on Trade and Transfer of Technology-Steps that might be taken within the mandate of the WTO to increase flows of technology to developing countries-Submission by India, Pakistan and the Philippines*. WTO Doc. WT/WGT'TT/W/10.

¹³ WTO. (2008). *Facilitating access to information on appropriate technology sourcing-A step to increase flows of technology to developing countries. Communication by India, Pakistan and the Philippines*. Room Document, Working Group on Trade and Transfer of Technology (WGT'TT).

¹⁴ WTO. (2011). *Committee on Trade and Environment Special Session- WTO negotiations on environmental goods and services: Addressing the development dimension for a "triple-win" outcome. Communication from China and India*. WTO Doc. TN/TE/W/79.

¹⁵ WTO. (2023). *Concerns on emerging trend of using environmental measures as protectionist non-tariff measures* (JOB/TE/78). CTE. Paper Circulated by India.

¹⁶ WT/MIN(24)/28. *Ministerial Declaration on the Contribution of the Multilateral Trading System to Tackle Environmental Challenges*.

¹⁷ WTO. (2023). *Role of transfer of technology in resilience building: Climate change mitigation and adaptation-Communication from the African Group*. WTO Doc. WT/GC/W/886.

¹⁸ WTO. (2025). *Draft Ministerial Declaration on Enabling the Transfer of Relevant and Advanced Technology for Trade. Communication from India*. WTO Doc. WT/GC/W/985.

environmental measures as protectionist non-tariff measures”, discussed in the CTE in March 2023.¹⁵

In its March 2023 submission, India argued that unilateral climate-related trade measures undermine multilateral outcomes under MEAs and upset the negotiated balance of rights and obligations and should not be normalized through WTO workstreams. Subsequently, at the 13th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC13, Abu Dhabi, 2024), a group of 72 members, including Bangladesh, Indonesia, South Africa, Argentina, and the African Group, circulated a communication calling for curbs on unilateral trade-related environmental measures imposed by developed countries and for discussions to be brought back into WTO forums instead of through unilateral action.¹⁶

The African Group has also called attention to the importance of technology transfer to developing countries to address environmental challenges. One of these, titled “Role of Transfer of Technology in Resilience Building: Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation”¹⁷ has highlighted the following critical issues to be discussed with a view to making recommendations for adoption at MC13, namely: (a) assessment of the TRIPS agreement to enhance technology transfer for diffusion of climate change technologies including compulsory licensing; (b) transfer of Environmentally Sound Technologies (EST) and financial commitments to ensure access to such technology; and (c) creation of a Trade and Environment Fund with the objective of facilitation

transfer of EST at reasonable prices.

Building on the above, India made a submission in October 2023, highlighting that effective climate action requires reinvigorated WTO work on trade-related transfer of ESTs to developing countries, including by creating finance and information mechanisms, and operationalizing long-standing but largely unimplemented technology-transfer commitments under UN climate and sustainable development instruments. It also highlights the need for consolidation from various repositories of ESTs and related IP information, and for WTO to play a more proactive role as a facilitator of transfer of much needed technology.

It also refers to a Trade and Environment Fund to: finance incremental costs of accessing proprietary and non-proprietary ESTs, provide grants for importing and retrofitting ESTs, support collaborative R&D and demonstrations, and finance technical assistance and capacity building. Annex 1 to India’s submission set out a detailed “post-MC13” roadmap structured around: (a) WTO discussions in CTE, TRIPS Council and WGTIT; (b) finance; (c) information platforms and databases; (d) voluntary licensing and regulatory environment; and (e) use of TRIPS flexibilities including compulsory licensing.

In December 2025, India proposed a “Draft Ministerial Declaration on enabling the transfer of relevant and advanced technologies for trade”.¹⁸ It highlights the need to facilitate improved trade flows from developing and least developed countries (LDCs) by addressing structural barriers to technology access, including

high costs, restrictive intellectual property regimes, export controls, and domestic capacity constraints. It urges developed Members to act without undue delay to facilitate transfer of technology and report progress. Further, it instructs the WGTTT make recommendations to the next Ministerial conference on measures that can facilitate transfer of technology and to deliver a timebound roadmap for realization of such measures. It aims to institutionalize the work of the WGTTT under this declaration as a standing item on the General Council agenda.

India's draft ministerial declaration seeks to embed technology transfer and equity at the heart of the WTO's trade and environment discussions. At the same time, its approach of requiring technology transfer may be difficult to monitor and implement for two simple reasons: (a) most technology, particularly proprietary ones, vest with private entities; and (b) governments cannot promise to compel their private sector actors to transfer technologies.

In that regard, a more practical approach would possibly be creating repositories of technologies, their IP status, their costs, and whether public funding could defray the costs. This was the essence of the 2023 submission that India had made.

In any event, whatever approach is considered, it would be useful to see if India is able to obtain the support of other members, particularly African group and LDCs, to co-sponsor any effort. This would be crucial for expecting any realistic outcome to emerge from the forthcoming ministerial.

Joint ministerial statements & discussions on environmental issues at the WTO

In December 2021, groups of WTO members issued ministerial statements outlining signatories' plans of action respectively on trade and environmental sustainability, plastics pollution, and fossil fuel subsidies reform. Discussion on each of these tracks has progressed over the last few years.

The Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured Discussions (TESSD), initially endorsed by 23 members and now expanded to 79 co-sponsors, operating on a voluntary and open basis. It conducts its technical work through four working groups focusing on trade-related climate measures, environmental goods and services, circular economy (circularity), and the trade impacts of relevant subsidies, including agricultural subsidies. The two other joint efforts on Plastics Pollution and Environmentally Sustainable Plastics Trade and on Fossil Fuel Subsidies Reform have also progressed in discussions on key issues of concerns for participating members. India has stayed outside each of these initiatives.

A key concern for India is that such initiatives involving only some WTO members, deviate from the core principle of multilateralism. Further, given the mandate of the CTE, India has taken the view that discussions on trade and environment linkages should be conducted within the CTE only.

5. Concluding Remarks

India has been a strong votary of preserving the WTO's integrity of discussing multilateral agreements, within its institutional framework. It has resisted the fragmentation of the WTO into a series of plurilateral and other joint discussion verticals.

India has also argued against use of unilateral climate-related trade measures, and stressed that WTO work on trade and environment must respect the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Paris Agreement principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC), and that the WTO is not the right forum to discuss this.

While taking a consistent stand against any substantive trade and environment linkage, India has sought to advance specific work items of the CTE by highlighting the importance of trade in technology transfer. While the underlying thematic elements of India's submissions resonate with those of other developing countries, there appears to be some weakness in India's ability to build coalitions with likeminded members, and reinvigorate the CTE discussions. Its October 2023 paper which laid a clear roadmap for discussions at the CTE, continues to be a "restricted" WTO document.

That paper drew valuable interlinkages between sustainable development and the role that trade can play in this regard, consistent with other multilateral agreements, including multilateral environmental agreements. It presented

a nuanced position highlights the positive and proactive relationship between trade and environment, whereby transfer of environmental technology can advance trade, and contribute to sustainable development. For this, the paper highlights several pathways, including the need to address the financing gaps, the technology gaps, and IPR issues.

To take the discussion forward on the post MC-13 roadmap that it had outlined, India needs co-sponsors to its submission. There clearly exist synergies with the submissions of other members, particularly the African group. It is in India's interests to revive the discussions at the CTE and WGTT discussions. Only a concerted effort can make these bodies the fulcrum of the negotiations.

A key development which India cannot afford to ignore is the TESSD. This is being shaped by proponents, such as the EU, to discuss climate-linked trade measures. India has emphasized the need for trade–environment work at the WTO to focus on issues “emanating from WTO agreements” and within the multilateral framework (CTE, TBT, SPS, etc.), rather than shifting sensitive climate-trade rule-making into platforms such as TESSD.

India is right to be sceptical of the negotiations in format such as TESSD, and those relating to plastics pollution and fossil fuel subsidies, which have deliberately deviated from discussions under the CTE. But to ensure that trade related sustainability discussions do not get fragmented, a more consistent and clear approach is needed that can deliver outcomes at the multilateral forums

such as CTE and WGTT. Strengthening engagement in these multilateral forums could help foster inclusive outcomes and ensure greater consistency in advancing these issues.

6. Way forward

For ensuring an effective counterfoil to the TESSD discussions, a clear path for reinvigorating discussions at the CTE is crucial. India has a powerful message to deliver on the concept of trade and sustainable development, and it has already set the stage for this with its submissions at the WTO. It needs to drive this forward ahead of MC14. Instead of simply dismissing “environment” as a non-trade issue which cannot be discussed at the WTO, it needs to lean in and take control of its narrative and its powerful message—which includes that: (a) the CTE is the body where trade and environmental issues need to be discussed head on; (b) the use of unilateral trade measures in the name of climate change makes a mockery

of both trade rules and MEA rules; (c) there exists a way in which trade can play a complimentary role for achieving the goal of climate change, and this is by unleashing and enabling the transfer of environmentally friendly technologies, at affordable prices. India’s oral and written submissions have brought in these themes; but this needs to be done with greater focus and with collaboration with other like minded countries.

The core question is no longer whether trade and sustainability should be linked, but where, how, and under whose rules. MC14 presents India with an opportunity to reaffirm the WTO’s centrality by advocating multilateral principles governing trade-related environmental measures, principles grounded in equity, proportionality, capacity constraints, and policy diversity. India could push for open and inclusive frameworks that discipline unilateralism while enhancing predictability for developing-country exporters.

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Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge the thoughtful interventions, reflections, and practical insights shared by the distinguished discussants and participants at the 5th RIS Brainstorming Series for the WTO MC14, titled “*Trade and Sustainability: Emerging Tensions and Pathways*,” held on 9th February 2026. Select observations from the moderator and panellists are highlighted below to reflect the richness and diversity of the discussion.



“We should be extra careful what kind of commitments we take in the Paris Accords and the ILO conventions....because they may come up in bilateral agreements”. “you may think you’re taking commitments in context of a particular forum where there is no dispute settlement and so on. But those things matter”.

Ambassador Mohan Kumar, Professor & Dean (Strategic & International Initiatives), Jindal School of International Affairs



“India has been active in shaping the narrative, even if not always inside every negotiating room.” “At this stage, political signalling matters more than technical detail, mandates can come later.”

Mr. Aashish Chandorkar, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of India, Geneva



“Sustainability is already embedded in trade through private standards and regulations; industry is dealing with it whether policy debates acknowledge it or not.”

“The real challenge is not positions in Geneva, but building domestic capacity to meet evolving regulations and standards.”

Mr. Anil Jauhri, Visiting Fellow, RIS & Former CEO of the NABCB



“We are fairly aligned with all the international agreements that the EU is talking about... We are much better than some EU member states in many cases.”

“The real objective should be reducing compliance costs for Indian industry through recognition of domestic systems and standards.”

Mr. Arpita Mukherjee, Professor, ICRIER



“I hope that under the CBAM discussions, we can get the EU to accept our CCTS as the standard and not go again all over through EU verification mechanisms...”

“The defensive agenda could be to guard our carbon budget... while the offensive agenda is to push CBDR and hold polluters accountable.”

Sangeeta Godbole, Former Senior Officer, Indian Revenue Service



“Current sustainability discussions at the WTO are evolving through non-binding guidelines that build incrementally on existing commitments.”

“Under TESSD there is an emphasis on... cooperation on the principles of international law relevant to trade climate measures... they have listed one of the fundamental principles of ‘no harm’... but there is some minor reference to the principle of CBDR which seems to be going at the back burner...”

Shiny Pradeep, Assistant Professor, CTIL

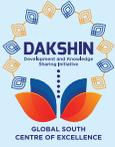


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RIS specialises in issues related to international economic development, trade, investment and technology. It is envisioned as a forum for fostering effective policy dialogue and capacity-building among developing countries on global and regional economic issues. The focus of the work programme of RIS is to promote South-South Cooperation and collaborate with developing countries in multilateral negotiations in various forums. Through its following centres/forums, RIS promotes policy dialogue and coherence on regional and international economic issues.



The word “DAKSHIN” (दक्षिण) is of Sanskrit origin, meaning “South.” The Hon’ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, inaugurated DAKSHIN – Global South Centre of Excellence in November 2023. The initiative was inspired by the deliberations of Global South leaders during the Voice of the Global South Summits. DAKSHIN stands for Development and Knowledge Sharing Initiative. Hosted at the RIS, DAKSHIN has established linkages with leading think tanks and universities across the Global South and is building a dynamic network of scholars working on Global South issues.



AIC at RIS has been working to strengthen India’s strategic partnership with ASEAN in its realisation of the ASEAN Community. AIC at RIS undertakes research, policy advocacy and regular networking activities with relevant organisations and think-tanks in India and ASEAN countries, with the aim of providing policy inputs, up-to-date information, data resources and sustained interaction, for strengthening ASEAN-India partnership.



CMEC has been established at RIS under the aegis of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPS&W), Government of India. CMEC is a collaboration between RIS and Indian Ports Association (IPA). It has been mandated to act as an advisory/technological arm of MoPSW to provide the analytical support on policies and their implementation.



FITM is a joint initiative by the Ministry of Ayush and RIS. It has been established with the objective of undertaking policy research on economy, intellectual property rights (IPRs) trade, sustainability and international cooperation in traditional medicines. FITM provides analytical support to the Ministry of Ayush on policy and strategy responses on emerging national and global developments.



BEF aims to serve as a dedicated platform for fostering dialogue on promoting the concept in the Indian Ocean and other regions. The forum focuses on conducting studies on the potential, prospects and challenges of blue economy; providing regular inputs to practitioners in the government and the private sectors; and promoting advocacy for its smooth adoption in national economic policies.



FIDC, has been engaged in exploring nuances of India’s development cooperation programme, keeping in view the wider perspective of South-South Cooperation in the backdrop of international development cooperation scenario. It is a tripartite initiative of the Development Partnership Administration (DPA) of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, academia and civil society organisations.



FIRD aims to harness the full potential and synergy between science and technology, diplomacy, foreign policy and development cooperation in order to meet India’s development and security needs. It is also engaged in strengthening India’s engagement with the international system and on key global issues involving science and technology.



As part of its work programme, RIS has been deeply involved in strengthening economic integration in the South Asia region. In this context, the role of the South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS) is very important. SACEPS is a network organisation engaged in addressing regional issues of common concerns in South Asia.



Knowledge generated endogenously among the Southern partners can help in consolidation of stronger common issues at different global policy fora. The purpose of NeST is to provide a global platform for Southern Think-Tanks for collaboratively generating, systematising, consolidating and sharing knowledge on South South Cooperation approaches for international development.



DST-Satellite Centre for Policy Research on STI Diplomacy at RIS aims to advance policy research at the intersection of science, technology, innovation (STI) and diplomacy, in alignment with India’s developmental priorities and foreign policy objectives.

— Policy research to shape the international development agenda —

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