

# Global crises bringing about an increasingly unequal world

The global COVID-19, economic and environmental crises are causing heightened inequalities, says the United Nations' top human rights official, who has called for enhancing equality "so that we can recover better, fairer and greener". The depth of the divide is starkly illustrated by a new report which finds that today's wealth and income gaps almost mirror those "at the peak of Western imperialism in the early 20th century".

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## THIRD WORLD ECONOMICS

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# COVID-19 pandemic has fed a “frightening rise in inequalities”

Stressing that equality is at the heart of human rights, the UN's rights chief has bemoaned the inequalities that fuelled the COVID-19 pandemic, which has in turn sharpened these disparities.

by *Kanaga Raja*

GENEVA: The COVID-19 pandemic has fed “a frightening rise in inequalities, leading to disproportionate transmission and death rates in the most marginalized communities, as well as contributing to soaring poverty levels, increased hunger, and plummeting living standards.”

This was one of the main messages highlighted by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, in a statement marking Human Rights Day on 10 December.

In her statement, the High Commissioner pointed out that the past two years have demonstrated, all too painfully, the intolerable cost of soaring inequalities. “Inequalities that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly 73 years ago on 10 December 1948, sought to eradicate in its effort to pave a path to a better world.”

The High Commissioner noted that the decades since then saw some very significant progress – gradual, uneven progress, with frequent setbacks, but definite progress nonetheless. “The world as a whole grew richer, and people lived longer. More children went to school, and more women were able to gain a greater measure of autonomy. More people in more countries had more opportunities to break the shackles of poverty, class, caste and gender.”

However, over the past 20 years, since 2001, a succession of global shocks have undermined that progress, and “the onset of this devastating pandemic in 2020 has laid bare many of our failures to consolidate the advances we had made.”

“Inequalities have fuelled the pandemic, and continue to do so. In turn, the pandemic has fed a frightening rise in inequalities, leading to disproportionate transmission and death rates in the most marginalized communities, as well as contributing to soaring poverty levels,

increased hunger, and plummeting living standards,” said Bachelet. “These, in turn, risk fuelling grievances, social unrest and even full-blown conflict.”

The rights chief said that women, low-income and informal workers, younger and older people, and those with disabilities, as well as members of ethnic, racial and religious minorities and indigenous peoples are among those hit hardest, creating even greater age, gender and racial inequalities.

Inequalities have widened both within and between countries, with most developed economies forecast to grow in 2022 while the lowest-income countries are projected to endure continued recession, pushing their people even further behind, Bachelet underlined.

“This divergence has been aggravated by shockingly unequal vaccine coverage – by 1 December, barely 8% of adults had received one dose of vaccine in low-income families, compared to 65% in high-income countries – and by shortfalls in social protections, which in the developed world kept many people afloat during the worst months of the crisis.”

The rights chief pointed out that in Europe, for example, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), at least 54 million jobs were supported between March and October 2020, keeping people and companies from going under, and that such assistance was less available in other regions.

The High Commissioner also said the environmental crisis is further exacerbating discrimination, marginalization and inequity. She noted that a total of 389 climate-related disasters were recorded in 2020, resulting in the deaths of more than 15,000 people, affecting 98 million others and inflicting \$171 billion in economic damage. Climate-related migration is also on the rise.

She said that actions to address these crises are not sufficient to avert these devastating human rights consequences, with affected communities often shut out of environmental decision-making processes where their input is essential.

The High Commissioner also drew attention to the growing debt crisis, which she said is weighing heavily on many countries. “Globally, over half of least-developed and low-income countries are now in, or at high risk of, debt distress,” she said. In East and Southern Africa, debt-servicing costs grew, on average, from 60% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2018 to nearly 70% of GDP in 2021, due in part to sharply shrinking economic activity and falling commodities prices.

The High Commissioner said the need to repay loans has already led to fiscal austerity measures that will limit the fiscal space for key investments in rights and sustainable recovery. “Austerity budgets often target health, education, infrastructure investment, and poverty reduction efforts. They disproportionately impact people in vulnerable situations – increasing inequalities that were already stark.”

### Agenda of action

Bachelet said that this is a critical period in world affairs. “Humanity is reeling from the setbacks sparked by COVID-19, and struggling to make the radical changes necessary to prevent further environmental disaster.”

“Yet the measures needed to prevent catastrophic climate change are well-known. And, even in resource-poor environments, we have the knowledge and means to establish universal social protection measures and take the necessary actions to end discrimination, advance the rule of law and uphold human rights,” she said.

The High Commissioner recalled the Common Agenda set out by the UN Secretary-General in September 2021 that calls for renewed solidarity between peoples and future generations; a new social contract anchored in human rights; better management of critical issues involving peace, development, health and our planet; and a revitalized multilateralism that can meet the challenges of our times.

“This is an agenda of action – and an agenda of rights,” said Bachelet. “It means moving from the temporary

pandemic measures to shore up health care and income protection to long-term investments in universal social protections – including universal health coverage – as well as decent housing, decent work, and access to quality education. It also means investment to bridge the digital divide.

“It means decisive action to uphold climate justice and the universal human right to a healthy environment. It means empowering people everywhere to speak up freely, and protecting civic space so that individuals can meaningfully participate in decisions that may have a dramatic impact on their lives.”

The High Commissioner further said: “Equality is at the heart of human rights, and at the heart of the solutions required to carry us through this period of global crisis. That doesn’t mean we must all look the same, think the same or act the same. Quite the opposite. It means that we embrace our diversity and demand that we are all treated without any kind of discrimination.”

She pointed out that “equality is about empathy and solidarity and about understanding that, as a common humanity, our only way forward is to work together for the common good.”

She noted that this was well understood during the years of rebuilding after World War II – the years that saw the development of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the subsequent elaboration of the all-embracing system of international human rights law.

“However, our failure to build back better after the financial crisis a decade ago, coupled with the social and economic turmoil caused by COVID-19 and the rapidly accelerating impacts of climate change, suggests we have forgotten the clear and proven remedies rooted in human rights and the importance of tackling inequalities. Remedies we must bring back to the forefront if we want to maintain progress – not just for those who suffer from the gross inequalities that blight our planet, but for the sake of all of us.”

On the occasion of Human Rights Day, the High Commissioner invited everyone to join efforts to enhance equality for everyone everywhere, “so that we can recover better, fairer and greener from this crisis, and rebuild societies that are more resilient and sustainable.” (SUNS9479)

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## Richest 1% took 38% of new global wealth since 1995. The bottom half got just 2%

A new report finds that global inequities in wealth and income are “about as great today as they were at the peak of Western imperialism in the early 20th century.”

by Jake Johnson

In the nearly three decades since 1995, members of the global 1% have captured 38% of all new wealth while the poorest half of humanity have benefited from just 2%, a finding that spotlights the stark and worsening gulf between the very rich and everyone else.

That’s according to the latest

iteration of the *World Inequality Report*, an exhaustive summary of worldwide income and wealth data that shows inequities in wealth and income are “about as great today as they were at the peak of Western imperialism in the early 20th century.”

“Indeed, the share of income presently

captured by the poorest half of the world's people is about half what it was in 1820, before the great divergence between Western countries and their colonies," the report notes. "In other words, there is still a long way to go to undo the global economic inequalities inherited from the very unequal organization of world production between the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries."

The authors of the new report, released in full on 7 December, go out of their way to stress that contemporary inequities in wealth and income are not inevitable, but rather the consequence of deliberate decisions by policymakers within individual countries and on the global stage.

"The Covid crisis has exacerbated inequalities between the very wealthy and the rest of the population," said Lucas Chancel, co-director of the World Inequality Lab and lead author of the new report. "Yet, in rich countries, government intervention prevented a massive rise in poverty – this was not the case in poor countries. This shows the importance of social states in the fight against poverty."

"If there is one lesson to be learnt from the global investigation carried out in this report," he added, "it is that inequality is always a political choice."

The new analysis shows that 2020 – a year of pandemic-induced economic dislocation that pushed tens of millions of people worldwide into extreme poverty – marked "the largest increase in the share of global billionaires wealth available on

record."

"In the US, the return of top wealth inequality has been particularly dramatic, with the top 1% share nearing 35% in 2020, approaching its Gilded Age level" states the report, whose contributors include prominent economists Thomas Piketty and Gabriel Zucman. "In Europe, top wealth inequality has also been on the rise since 1980, though significantly less so than in the US."

At present, the richest 10% of the world's population grab more than half of all global income, the researchers found. The billions of people in the poorest half of the global population, meanwhile, get just 8% of the world's income.

"Global wealth inequalities are even more pronounced than income inequalities," the report finds. "The poorest half of the global population barely owns any wealth at all, possessing just 2% of the total. In contrast, the richest 10% of the global population own 76% of all wealth."

### Policy recommendations

In keeping with their argument that skyrocketing income and wealth inequality is a choice, the report's authors recommend that world leaders pursue several policy solutions to the global inequity crisis, which has far-reaching economic, political and ecological implications.

With a "modest progressive wealth tax on global multimillionaires, the report

argues, "1.6% of global incomes could be generated and reinvested in education, health, and the ecological transition."

If implemented in the US, such a tax would help reverse the decades-long trend of falling income taxes paid by the wealthiest individuals. The report notes that "today, the effective tax rates of the working class, the middle class, and top 1% are very close."

The report also suggests progressive corporate taxes and government crackdowns on "pervasive tax evasion" by the super-rich could help reduce yawning wealth inequities.

More broadly, the authors argue that in order to "put an end to large imbalances in capital and income flows between the Global North and the Global South, it is necessary to reassess the basic principles of globalization."

"It is not unreasonable to assume that each country in the world should have equal rights to development, in the sense that each human being should have equal access to basic education and healthcare services to start with," the report states. "The question of how to fund such basic services is entirely political, thereby depending on the set of rules and institutions put in place by societies across the world."

*Jake Johnson is a staff writer for [Common Dreams](#), from which this article is reproduced under a Creative Commons licence (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0).*

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# GC chair, DG call for WTO pandemic response, fisheries deal by end-February

With the WTO Ministerial Conference postponed, the trade body's General Council chair and Director-General are now urging members to finalize a response to the pandemic and a fisheries subsidies accord by the end of February.

by D. Ravi Kanth

GENEVA: The World Trade Organization's General Council (GC) chair and the WTO Director-General on 8 December appealed to trade ministers to empower their trade envoys in Geneva to conclude multilateral decisions on the "WTO's response to the pandemic, including the TRIPS dimension", and on "fisheries subsidies" by the end of February.

In a joint letter to trade ministers seen by the *South-North Development Monitor (SUNS)*, the GC chair, Ambassador Dacio Castillo from Honduras, and DG Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said they have "heard the desire to harness the constructive momentum in the fisheries subsidies negotiations, and to build exchanges in other areas including agriculture."

However, they failed to mention the outstanding mandated issue concerning a permanent solution for public stockholding (PSH) programmes for food security, as demanded by the G33 coalition of developing countries led by Indonesia, and the African Group. The mere mention of agriculture in the letter, without calling for an outcome on PSH programmes, is bound to create an uproar among several developing countries, said people who asked not to be quoted.

With the cancellation of the Doha agriculture negotiating body meeting that had been scheduled to take place on 8 December, which angered many developing countries, the call to conclude decisions on the WTO response to the pandemic and on fisheries subsidies without a decision on the PSH permanent solution could severely derail the prospects of meeting the end-February target, said people who asked not to be quoted.

## "Act now"

In their one-page letter, Castillo and Okonjo-Iweala wrote that "the WTO cannot afford to wait for a ministerial conference before it delivers," following the postponement of the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12), which had been scheduled to take place in Geneva on 30 November-3 December, due to the emergence of the Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

"We have to act now, devising new ways of working as needed to achieve meaningful multilateral outcomes," the GC chair and the DG argued.

"Our aim is to conclude deals, or at least resolve brackets and clean up texts to the full extent possible," they emphasized.

"To this end," they asked the trade ministers to "empower your Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives in Geneva to exercise the requisite flexibility and political will."

They urged the ministers to debrief their envoys during the upcoming Christmas holidays, "concerting with them sufficiently to enable them to conclude agreements on their return to Geneva."

They said "the world cannot wait ... it needs a WTO that delivers for citizens, especially amidst the current circumstances."

"The new Omicron variant has reminded us once again of the urgency of converging on a WTO response to the pandemic, including the TRIPS dimension ... We have to resolve this now," said Castillo and Okonjo-Iweala in their letter.

However, the GC chair and the DG must realize that there is little support among WTO members for the DG's so-called "third way" approach and also the European Union's proposal relating to the use of compulsory licensing. At a time when the world is grappling with the Omicron variant and the economic slowdown caused by it, the WTO needs to focus only on concluding the temporary TRIPS waiver proposed by many developing countries, said several members who asked not to be quoted.

The waiver would suspend the implementation of certain provisions in the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) relating to copyrights, industrial designs, patents and protection of undisclosed information for a period of three years in order to ramp up the production of COVID-19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics.

The 64 co-sponsors of the waiver proposal have made repeated calls for finalizing the waiver to address the pandemic on a "war footing". However, a handful of countries – the EU, Switzerland and the UK – have blocked attempts to approve the waiver and even refused to engage in text-based negotiations so far. Although the US has supported the waiver since May this year, it has failed to provide leadership in crafting an outcome, said people familiar with the discussions.

In her intervention at an informal meeting of heads of delegation on 2 December, the DG had said "there are 7 billion people waiting with regards to the TRIPS and the response to the pandemic," and "250 million people are waiting for us on fisheries."

If that be the case, then the negotiations on the TRIPS waiver, as well as on the PSH permanent solution which would address the problem of global hunger, ought to be accorded the highest priority as compared with fisheries subsidies, said people who preferred not to be identified.

Furthermore, trade negotiations always hinge on "give-and-take" trade-offs; without them, progress is inevitably stalled. By not treating all the multilateral issues on the table on par, the GC chair and the DG are attempting to foist their choices on members, said people who asked not to be quoted.

## Negotiating format

In their letter to the trade ministers, the GC chair and the DG said “we propose to work towards an end-February deadline for the WTO response to the pandemic including the TRIPS dimension, as well as the fisheries subsidies negotiations, without prejudice to other areas of work.”

“The goal would be to have clean texts that you, Ministers can bless end-February,” they proposed.

They have also subtly indicated that MC12, as and when it is reconvened, could be a mini-ministerial meeting as happened in 2008.

“The precise format for Ministers to collectively look at texts can be determined in light of the prevailing epidemiological situation at the time,” they wrote in their

letter.

The GC chair and the DG went on to say that business-as-usual approaches are something the world, and the WTO, can no longer afford. They argued that even difficult political issues can be resolved amid uncertainty around in-person meetings by harnessing “the power of technology” to “allow Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives to consult in real time.”

But it is well established that decisions are difficult to conclude virtually, given the fears of revealing positions through a virtual mode, said people who asked not to be quoted.

In multilateral trade negotiations, it is often said that dollars-and-cents and regulatory commitments count, while global solidarity matters only on issues

concerning the pandemic, particularly the TRIPS waiver, said people who asked not to be quoted.

“Our ailing world, and the people we serve need us to deliver now,” the GC chair and the DG said in their letter.

If that be the case, it is time to conclude the decision on the TRIPS waiver before any other issue.

Interestingly, the DG made a similar request at the virtual ministerial meeting on fisheries subsidies on 15 July for delegating ministerial powers to trade envoys, but it failed to materialize.

In short, many trade ministers may not prefer to delegate their powers to their trade envoys, said people who asked not to be quoted. (*SUNS9478*)

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# Developing countries call for concluding work on TRIPS waiver

As the WTO holds discussions to determine the way forward following the postponement of its Ministerial Conference, proponents of waiving WTO intellectual property protections for COVID-19 medical products have reiterated the urgency of putting this measure in place.

by *D. Ravi Kanth*

GENEVA: Many developing and least-developed countries have raised the stakes on the temporary TRIPS waiver and on public stockholding programmes for food security, suggesting that other issues, including fisheries subsidies, could be calibrated due to the postponement of the WTO’s 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12), said people familiar with the discussions.

At an informal heads-of-delegation (HoD) meeting on 2 December, the developing countries, led by South Africa and India, flagged their specific demands centring on the unresolved issue of the TRIPS waiver in the WTO’s response to the pandemic as well as on the permanent solution for public stockholding programmes for food security (PSH).

With the emergence of the new Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that is capable of slowing down global economic activity, South Africa, India and several other developing countries spoke about the heightened urgency of agreeing on the TRIPS waiver, said people familiar with the discussions.

Members also offered their differing assessments on a letter written by the trade ministers from Kazakhstan, Australia, Uganda and Barbados seeking the reconvening of the postponed Ministerial Conference in the first week of March, said people who preferred not to be quoted. The minister from Kazakhstan is the chair of MC12, and the Australian, Ugandan and Barbadian ministers are the vice-chairs.

The letter was contained in an email sent by the WTO secretariat to member delegations on 29 November.

WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala has clarified that the letter was under the ministers’ own responsibility and that the WTO secretariat merely emailed the letter.

Barring the four signatories to the letter, however, many members seem to have ruled out the prospects for reconvening MC12 anytime soon, said people who asked not to be quoted.

Okonjo-Iweala urged members to finalize a clear blueprint by the end of February, asking them to get ready for an intensive round of meetings from the second half of January.

Though the DG emphasized on concluding work on fisheries subsidies as well as on the WTO’s response to the pandemic with an intellectual property component, the co-sponsors of the TRIPS waiver proposal pressed for an early outcome in unambiguous terms, said people who asked not to be quoted.

At the HoD meeting, South Africa suggested that work on the TRIPS waiver should be hastened to arrive at a solution before the Christmas break. It said the waiver must be addressed on an emergency basis, a concern that was shared by Jamaica on behalf of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group, Chad on behalf of the least-developed

countries, and India among others.

India brought the issue of PSH along with the TRIPS waiver to centrestage at the meeting.

Indonesia, which coordinates the G33 group of developing countries, called for intensifying work on all unresolved issues in the agriculture dossier, particularly PSH.

Regardless of the postponement of MC12, the EU said it will reach out to capitals to sort out the unresolved issues on the table.

The EU has been putting pressure on several governments to agree to a deal on fisheries subsidies and on WTO reform, said people who asked not to be quoted.

### MC12 outcome document

Also at the HoD meeting, the chair of the WTO General Council, Ambassador Dacio Castillo of Honduras, said that he would continue his consultations with members on the MC12 outcome document.

Several major issues such as the legal status of the informal plurilateral Joint Statement Initiatives, as well as WTO reforms that seek to eliminate the principle of consensus-based decision making and introduce differentiation among developing countries in availing of special and differential treatment, remain in square brackets and are proving difficult for any resolution at this juncture, said several people who asked not to be quoted.

The GC chair also spoke about further negotiations on the controversial report prepared by the outgoing facilitator overseeing discussions on the WTO's response to the pandemic, Ambassador David Walker from New Zealand.

Amid unconfirmed reports that the current chair of the WTO's TRIPS Council, Ambassador Dagfinn Sorli from Norway, would take over as the new facilitator, several countries seemed opposed because of Sorli's alleged controversial role in taking the negotiations in the direction of undermining the waiver discussions, said a person who asked not to be quoted.

At the HoD meeting, apparently, a South American country proposed Sorli's name for the role of facilitator. However, the issue was not discussed in detail at the meeting.

But, even if there is any move to appoint Sorli, "we will oppose it", said a person who asked not to be quoted.

Several members may prefer the General Council chair Castillo to lead the negotiations on the WTO's response to the pandemic, said people who asked not to be quoted. He has played an important balancing role in the discussions on the MC12 outcome document and is best suited for overseeing the unfinished work on the WTO's response to the pandemic, including the TRIPS waiver, said people who asked not to be quoted.

### Chairs' reports

At the HoD meeting, the chair of the Doha agriculture negotiations, Ambassador Gloria Abraham Peralta from Costa Rica, provided a rather grim assessment as to where the issues stand at this juncture, including on the PSH permanent solution.

Apparently, the WTO Director-General had held a meeting with select countries including the US, the EU, China, India, South Africa, Brazil, Australia and Canada to discuss the difficult issues in

the agriculture dossier, particularly PSH, said people who asked not to be quoted.

The chair of the fisheries subsidies negotiations, Ambassador Santiago Wills from Colombia, provided an upbeat assessment projecting that a final agreement is almost on the cards for ministers to decide on a few issues, said people who asked not to be quoted.

The chair of the Doha services negotiations, who is from Kazakhstan, suggested that there is still no consensus on the ministerial decision on services, while the chair of the Doha special negotiating body on trade and development spoke about the G90 proposal concerning improvements in 10 agreement-specific provisions on special and differential treatment.

The TRIPS Council chair Sorli said he is ready to intensify discussions on the TRIPS waiver as well as on the EU proposal on compulsory licensing, suggesting that there is more work that needs to be done in the coming days. (SUNS9474)

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## South countries demand robust S&DT in fisheries subsidies deal

WTO negotiations to craft disciplines regulating fisheries subsidies are stymied by differences over the extent of special and differential treatment to be accorded developing countries.

by D. Ravi Kanth

GENEVA: The need for robust special and differential treatment (S&DT) provisions in the agreement on fisheries subsidies appears to have become the main issue in the battle between the developing countries and the big subsidizers in the WTO negotiations in this area, said people familiar with the discussions.

In her intervention at a heads-of-delegation (HoD) meeting on 2 December, WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala had said "I think we should focus on delivering [the WTO's] response to the pandemic and fisheries subsidies no later

than end February", exhorting members to "work towards that goal".

She called on members "to come back reasonably early in the new year, perhaps the second week of January, so that we can restart work – similar to what we did in the summer when we came back before Jeune Genevois [which took place in early September] and we undertook to start work together."

On the following day, 3 December, the DG's hopes of concluding an agreement on fisheries subsidies by end-February seemed to have been dented, however,

after the big subsidizers – the European Union, the United States, Canada, Japan, Korea, Chinese Taipei and China among others – which through their subsidies have been the main contributors to the problem of overcapacity and overfishing (OC&OF) and thereby to the global depletion of fish stocks, refused to provide a longer duration for S&DT to the developing countries, said people who asked not to be quoted.

The chair of the Doha fisheries subsidies negotiations, Ambassador Santiago Wills from Colombia, held a meeting at the HoD level on 3 December to discuss the bracketed text on S&DT as contained in Article 5.4 of the draft agreement on fisheries subsidies.

A footnote to Article 5.4 states that “this provision shall not apply to Members whose annual share of the global volume of marine capture production is at or above 10 per cent as per the most recent published FAO data.”

This footnote seems to be specifically aimed at excluding China from availing of S&DT in the agreement.

In paragraph (a) of Article 5.4, the draft text states that “a developing country Member may grant or maintain the subsidies referred to in Article 5.1 to fishing and fishing related activities within its EEZ [exclusive economic zone] and the area of competence of a relevant RFMO/A [regional fisheries management organization or arrangement] for a maximum of [X] years after the entry into force of this Agreement. A developing country Member intending to invoke this provision shall inform the Committee in writing before the date of entry into force of this Agreement.”

The chair has left the period of [X] years open due apparently to opposition from the big subsidizers. Their opposition to the longer duration of 25 years that has been proposed by India came into the open at the HoD meeting on 3 December, said people familiar with the development.

Under paragraph (b) in Article 5.4, which is generally referred to as the *de minimis*, “a developing country Member may grant or maintain the subsidies referred to in Article 5.1 to fishing and fishing related activities: (i) if its annual share of the global volume of marine capture production does not exceed [0.7 per cent] as per the most recent published FAO data; (ii) for low income, resource-poor and livelihood fishing or fishing

related activities, up to [12] nautical miles measured from the baselines.”

Paragraph (c) states: “While applying Article 5.4, a Member shall endeavour to ensure that its subsidies do not contribute to overcapacity or overfishing.”

In response to India’s proposal for an exemption period of 25 years, the EU said it could consider a period of around five years for S&DT.

Japan apparently indicated a period of 5-7 years, while the other big subsidizers remained “inflexible” over the duration of S&DT, said people who preferred not to be quoted.

The US did not divulge any number, suggesting that it did not want to engage in the discussion on this issue.

The US apparently said that it has already made a payment to developing countries on S&DT, perhaps referring to the *de minimis* provision in the draft agreement, said people who preferred not to be quoted.

While the big subsidizers seem prepared to take the negotiations to the wire with their “inflexible” positions when it comes to S&DT for developing countries, they have themselves managed to secure a special carve-out in Article 5.1.1 of the draft agreement, under which they can continue with their huge subsidies, subject to demonstrating that “measures are implemented to maintain the stock or stocks in the relevant fishery

or fisheries at a biologically sustainable level”.

South Africa severely criticized the big subsidizers for their positions on S&DT, suggesting that they are not serious about concluding the negotiations, said people present at the meeting.

The DG is understood to have said that she is extremely disappointed over the continued differences among the members.

Earlier, at the 2 December HoD meeting, the DG had said that “250 million people are waiting for us on fisheries. And there are 7 billion people waiting with regards to the TRIPS and the response to the pandemic.”

If the DG is so concerned about the welfare of the 250 million people who are dependent on fishing for their survival, then she must realize that they are the people seeking robust special and differential treatment because their governments cannot compete with the big subsidizers which are spending tens of billions of dollars on fuel and other subsidies, said people who asked not to be quoted.

Furthermore, saving 7 billion people from the pandemic who are waiting for the temporary TRIPS waiver, must precede all other issues, including the fisheries subsidies negotiations, said people who asked not to be quoted. (SUNS9476)

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## Attempts to transform WTO into a “plurilateral” trade organization

Plurilateral initiatives among subsets of the WTO membership dealing with a variety of issues threaten the core multilateral principles of the WTO system as well as developing-country interests.

by D. Ravi Kanth

GENEVA: Several ministerial statements were issued on 3 December on the issue of trade and environment, in an apparent continuation of attempts to transform the WTO into a “plurilateral” trade organization.

After the postponement of the WTO’s 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12), a flurry of unmandated plurilateral ministerial statements have been issued in areas covering the Joint Statement Initiatives (JSIs) on services domestic



regulation, trade and gender, and trade and environment, among others.

(Besides these initiatives, which are being steered by the European Union, there was also a trilateral initiative announced by the United States, the EU and Japan on 30 November. This “trilateral partnership cooperation” was to “address global challenges posed by non-market policies and practices of third countries”, as well as to look into WTO reforms, all seen as being aimed at targeting China, said people familiar with the development.)

As part of what appears to be a rather dangerous push towards turning the WTO, an intergovernmental and multilateral trade body, into a plurilateral trade organization, these JSIs constitute the biggest threat to advancing the interests of the developing countries in the coming years, said people who asked not to be quoted.

The three ministerial statements on trade and environment that were issued on 3 December pertain to: (1) structured discussions on trade and environmental sustainability; (2) phasing out of fossil fuel subsidies; and (3) an informal dialogue on plastic pollution and environmentally sustainable plastics trade.

WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala has not made any official comment on these three statements, as she had done on the JSI agreement on services domestic regulation (see following article).

Nonetheless, in her very first statement made at the time of her appointment as DG on 15 February this year, she had said: “We should also work to ensure that the WTO best supports the green and circular economy and addresses more broadly the nexus between trade and climate change.”

She went on to say that “trade and environmental protection can be mutually reinforcing, both contributing to sustainable development.”

She emphasized the importance of re-activating and broadening “the negotiations on environmental goods and services. This would help promote trust and encourage Members to explore further ways in which trade can contribute positively to an improved climate.”

She also said that “care must, however, be taken to ensure that any disciplines are not used arbitrarily or as a disguised restriction on trade, and that they take

into account the need for developing countries to be assisted to transition to the use of greener and more environmentally friendly technologies.”

And on 14 October, in tune with the EU’s plans to impose a carbon border tax arrangement, Okonjo-Iweala, in an article published in the *Financial Times*, said that “adopting a global carbon price is essential”.

While acknowledging that the “poor regions of the world see this [carbon border tax] measure as unfair”, she said that “this is no argument against carbon pricing”.

“The most straightforward solution would be a global carbon price aligned with the Paris Agreement,” she said, suggesting that “this would help achieve our collective climate goals, and bring stability and fairness for cross-border business.”

In short, there is not a moment when the DG has not overly endorsed the elements revolving around the carbon border tax arrangements that have been pushed by the EU and the US, including in their recent bilateral steel agreement, said people familiar with the development.

### Ministerial statements

The ministerial statement on the “Trade and Environmental Sustainability Structured Discussions” (TESSD), which was signed by the US and China among others, highlights “the recent and current efforts by a diversity of WTO Members to address and promote dialogue and information sharing at the WTO on issues where trade, environmental and climate policies intersect, including on circular economy; natural disasters; climate change mitigation and adaptation; fossil fuel subsidies reform; plastic pollution; combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and ensuring legal and sustainable trade in wildlife; the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity; sustainable oceans; facilitating access to green technology; sustainable tourism; sustainable agriculture as well as trade in environmental goods and services.”

It calls for launching “dedicated discussions on how trade-related climate measures and policies can best contribute to climate and environmental goals and commitments while being consistent with WTO rules and principles.”

The statement calls on WTO members to “explore opportunities and possible approaches for promoting and facilitating trade in environmental goods and services to meet environmental and climate goals, including through addressing supply chain, technical and regulatory elements.”

Meanwhile, the ministerial statement on fossil fuel subsidies calls for “the rationalization and phase out of inefficient fossil fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption along a clear timeline and encourage[s] the remaining WTO Members to join us in those efforts, recognizing the substantial financial resource this could unlock globally to support the transition.”

The statement acknowledges the need for reform of fossil fuel subsidies to take into account “the specific needs and conditions of developing countries and minimize the possible adverse impacts on their development in a manner that protects the poor and the affected communities.”

However, it seeks to place burdensome notification requirements on the developing countries, including through “enhanced World Trade Organization transparency and reporting that will enable the evaluation of the trade, economic, and environment effects of fossil fuel subsidy programmes.”

It also emphasizes on “elaborating concrete options to advance this issue at the World Trade Organization in advance of MC13.”

In the ministerial statement on plastic pollution and environmentally sustainable plastics trade, the signatories pledged “to intensify our work on areas of common interest with a view to identifying actions that participating members could take collectively to support global efforts to reduce plastics pollution.”

As part of the shared actions on sustainable plastics trade, the statement calls for “identifying ways to improve the understanding of global trade in plastics, including flows of plastics embedded in internationally traded goods or associated with them (such as plastic packaging), and enhance transparency regarding trade policies relevant to reducing plastic pollution and more environmentally sustainable plastics trade.”

It calls for “sharing experiences of effective approaches to move towards more circular, resource efficient and

environmentally sustainable plastics trade”.

The statement emphasizes the need to move towards more circular plastics economies and “environmentally sound management, recovery and recycling of plastics.”

Although the statement highlights the need to facilitate “access to key technologies” and “expand trade in environmentally sustainable and effective substitutes and alternatives,” it is well established that these goals invariably remain unfulfilled at the WTO.

### “Plurilateralization” of the WTO

The non-mandated ministerial decisions on digital trade, trade and environment, trade and gender, plastics, disciplines for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), etc show the eagerness of the developed countries to pursue their market access and trade liberalization agenda even if this comes at the cost of undermining the core principles of the WTO, including the principle of consensus-based decision making, said people who asked not to be

quoted.

Moreover, these initiatives are destroying the existing multilateral initiatives within the WTO on these issues such as the work programmes on services domestic regulation and on e-commerce, the work in the Committee on Trade and Environment, etc, said people who asked not to be quoted.

The alleged role played by the WTO secretariat, particularly the DG, in pushing these decisions and further hailing the success of agreements reached between a few countries such as on services domestic regulation, may prove to be the final nail in the coffin of the WTO, said people who preferred not to be quoted.

Some of these decisions, such as on trade and gender and on MSMEs, may seem innocuous in relation to the development concerns of the developing countries, but they have the potential to be used to undercut the special and differential treatment provided to the developing countries, as they put at par women and MSMEs in developed countries with those in developing and least-developed countries.

The ministerial decisions on issues such as trade and environment and plastics could directly impact on the trade competitiveness of the developing countries. They could also adversely impact exports of plastic products and metals and minerals, which are major export items of the developing countries.

At the same time, these decisions will push imports of so-called environmentally friendly goods, services and technologies into developing countries, as the developed countries are major exporters of these goods and services.

In conclusion, it’s time for the developing countries to wake up to these realities and push for ministerial decisions only on mandated issues such as the permanent solution for public stockholding programmes for food security, cotton, etc.

The developing countries should refuse to engage in any discussions or negotiations at the WTO until there is an agreement on the TRIPS waiver, said people who asked not to be quoted. (SUNS9477)

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## DG undermining multilateral framework in embracing JSI DR outcome?

The WTO Director-General has welcomed an agreement among certain WTO member states on regulation of the services sector, despite concerns that such initiatives run afoul of the multilateral character of the trade body.

by D. Ravi Kanth

GENEVA: The WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala appears to have gone overboard on 2 December in celebrating an agreement among the 67 WTO members participating in the non-mandated plurilateral Joint Statement Initiative (JSI) on services domestic regulation (DR), even as the legal status of the JSIs remains under challenge

on grounds that they go against the Marrakesh Agreement that established the WTO, said people familiar with the development.

Further, the JSI agreement on services domestic regulation seems to be aimed at undermining the ongoing multilateral work in the WTO’s Working Party on Domestic Regulation (WPDR), said

people familiar with the development.

Hailing the JSI agreement on DR as a great success in the WTO’s services negotiations, Okonjo-Iweala has made somewhat hyperbolic claims that it would generate gains to countries to the tune of \$150 billion.

In the past, such astronomical figures, like the \$1 trillion in gains from the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) touted by the then WTO DG Pascal Lamy, fell flat on the ground because the actual gains were few and far between. Often, such figures turned out to be “mere lies” to mislead the WTO members, said an analyst who asked not to be quoted.

### DG’s congratulations

At a rather unusual press conference moderated by the chief of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), a business organization, Okonjo-Iweala said “I congratulate JSI members” for this

“fantastic” outcome.

She said the agreement on DR will help micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and lower services trade costs while generating gains to the tune of \$150 billion. She also claimed that the Information Technology Agreement (ITA) has generated \$1.2 trillion (in gains), suggesting that the agreement will reduce services costs.

She said the growth in services trade was higher than for trade in goods.

When asked whether it was proper for the ICC to moderate the press conference, the DG said the WTO has been working with the ICC.

Several non-JSI members expressed grave concern over the DG's participation as well as her blessings given to the JSI members in concluding the agreement, saying that it is a very “serious” issue, said people who asked not to be quoted.

On 4 May this year, Okonjo-Iweala had acknowledged her mistake in bringing the issue of the non-mandated JSIs into an informal meeting of the WTO's Trade Negotiations Committee.

At a time when the legal status of the JSIs is being challenged, the DG's comments at the press conference cannot be pushed aside, said a Geneva-based trade official who preferred not to be quoted. “She appears determined to undermine the multilateral trade framework of the WTO, particularly the work being undertaken by the WTO's Working Party on Domestic Regulation,” the person said.

“This is a serious issue and it needs to be taken up in the coming days,” said another person who asked not to be quoted.

### **Australia and EU “pat their backs”**

In separate statements, the EU and Australia presented an upbeat assessment of the JSI agreement on services domestic regulation, which has been opposed by a large majority of developing countries, including India and South Africa.

According to Australia, the new disciplines under the JSI agreement cover licensing and qualification requirements and procedures as well as technical standards.

The EU claimed that the outcome of the negotiations will be applied on a “most-favoured nation” (MFN) basis.

The US Trade Representative (USTR) Katherine Tai praised the agreement,

saying that Washington “has long championed transparency and fairness of regulatory rules as a fundamental feature of good governance, and the DR JSI is an opportunity to strengthen such standards around the globe.”

She said “this initiative is the first successful WTO services negotiation in years, and shows how WTO Members can take practical, common sense steps to address clearly defined trade problems.”

However, the JSI agreement on DR is not expected to do away with the numerous barriers being imposed on the movement of short-term services providers under Mode 4, a services trade analyst said, suggesting that it is beneficial only to the major industrialized countries.

With the DG joining the chorus of praise for the JSI outcome on DR, it appears that the WTO may not advance multilateral outcomes on issues such as the WPDR's attempt to craft disciplines on domestic regulation, said people who asked not to be quoted.

Perhaps, except for an agreement on fisheries subsidies, the DG seems determined to throw her full weight behind accomplishing the JSIs on digital trade, investment facilitation and disciplines on MSMEs as well as attempts to terminate the principle of consensus-based decision-making and bring about differentiation among developing countries in availing of special and differential treatment at the WTO, said an analyst who asked not to be quoted.

### **Sharp concern**

To safeguard the ongoing work in the WPDR, India and South Africa had issued a joint statement at a meeting of the WPDR on 30 June expressing sharp concern over the alleged violation of commitments under the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

India had already expressed its concerns over the JSI on DR on two grounds at a WPDR meeting in 2019. It had said: (a) any “additional commitments” under Article XVIII of GATS by the members of the JSI cannot purport to be a fulfilment of the GATS mandate under Article VI.4, which clearly envisages only a multilateral process, for which the WTO members have constituted the WPDR; and (b) while each member has the right to incorporate “additional commitments” into its schedule, the underlying principle is that none of these

additional commitments should directly or indirectly amount to a dilution or amendment of any of the provisions of GATS, and that what is incorporated should pertain to “specific commitments” regarding measures affecting trade in services, not “general obligations and disciplines”.

India and South Africa subsequently highlighted, in a February 2021 submission on the “Legal Status of Joint Statement Initiatives and their Negotiated Outcomes”, how the JSIs, including the JSI on DR, are working against multilateral mandates.

According to India and South Africa, there is a contradiction between JSIs and the fundamental principles and objectives of the multilateral system enshrined in the Marrakesh Agreement, including Article II.1 (“The WTO shall provide the common institutional framework for the conduct of trade relations among its Members...”); Article III.2 (“The WTO shall provide the forum for negotiations among its Members concerning their multilateral trade relations”); consensus-based decision-making, as enshrined in Articles III.2, IX, X and also X.9; and the procedures for amendments of rules as articulated in Article X.

India and South Africa cautioned that any attempt to introduce new rules resulting from the JSI negotiations into the WTO without fulfilling the requirements of the Marrakesh Agreement would “lead to the marginalization or exclusion of issues which are difficult but which remain critical for the multilateral trading system, such as agriculture, development, thereby undermining balance in agenda setting, negotiating processes and outcomes; leave Members with no option other than to choose between remaining outside the discussions or participating on matters that are inconsistent with their economic development priorities, needs, concerns and levels of economic development; [and] fragment the multilateral trading system and undermine the multilateral character of the WTO.”

In the case of the JSI on DR, India and South Africa said the JSI proponents “have subverted the WPDR's multilateral mandate by not just undertaking exploratory discussions, but actually negotiating such disciplines through a parallel discussion format designed to bypass the multilateral process.” (SUNS9473)



## *Omicron and developing countries – where threats are the greatest*

*Alexander Kozul-Wright* flags the regions of the Global South that could be most affected by the economic fallout from the emergence of the Omicron coronavirus variant.

On 25 November, news emerged from South Africa of a new COVID-19 variant. It has since been identified as Omicron, a Greek alphabet derivation by the World Health Organization (WHO).

For now, scientists are still racing to understand Omicron's virulence. There is, however, growing concern that its high number of mutations makes it more transmissible and more resistant to existing vaccines (or previous infections) than other variants.

Currently, these worries are based on preliminary analysis emerging from South Africa, where the new variant was first detected. Further data monitoring will be needed to inform countries about appropriate policy responses. But irrespective of whether the Omicron panic is justified, economic shockwaves have run ahead of the disease.

The virus has already sent jitters through financial markets in advanced economies and complicated the policy stance of central bankers in Europe and the US.

In the Global South, meanwhile, some regions are likely to be more affected than others. Three key observations underscore where economic risks are the greatest.

The first is a threat of renewed country lockdowns. To date, COVID-19 has tightened the fiscal space available to many developing countries. Recent inflationary pressures have also put paid to further monetary policy loosening. Lockdowns would be particularly damaging in Latin America, therefore, as macro-financial policies across the continent are approaching an upper bound.

Although Omicron has not yet been detected in China, its presence there would almost certainly prompt Beijing to double down on its "zero tolerance" strategy, resulting in local lockdowns and reduced consumption. If authorities

decided to reimpose restrictions comparable to those observed in August 2021 following an outbreak in Nanjing, the toll on growth would be considerable – economists slashed China's quarterly growth expectations at the time due to city-wide closures.

While other countries lack China's willingness to choke off economic activity, under-funded healthcare systems may force developing-country governments to impose social distancing to try and limit pressure on hospitals. Here, countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are least well prepared, as vaccine rates remain particularly low (from 1-30%).

### The COVID-19 crisis continues to expose the disparity in fiscal and monetary firepower available to developed vs. developing economies.

The second factor relates to trade. Omicron could dampen the recent gains in global trade, which the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) forecasts will increase by 23% in 2021 from the year before, due to the easing of pandemic restrictions and economic stimulus packages.

However, UNCTAD's forecast did not consider an outbreak of Omicron. A fresh wave of lockdowns would be particularly damaging in East Asia, where intra-industry value chains are deeply connected. With global supply chains still vulnerable, further supply disruptions across China – which accounts for

roughly one-fifth of world merchandise exports – would pare back world trade.

Tourism could take a big hit over the coming weeks if governments continue suspending travel routes. Shrinking foreign exchange earnings would be especially hard felt in the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, where tourism makes up a relatively large share of national income compared with other developing-country regions.

The third angle relates to financial market fluctuations. The VIX index, a measure of Wall Street's expected volatility one month into the future, has risen by 47% since 24 November. Meanwhile, the yield on 10-year US Treasury securities, which move in line with growth and inflation expectations, fell 13% over the same period. Jitters have been apparent in a broad array of financial market barometers.

The prices of developing-country currencies and commodities – both considered risky assets – have nosedived over the past two weeks, with oil benchmarks on both sides of the Atlantic down 10-15% since the discovery of Omicron. A sustained period of falling energy prices would undermine OPEC countries' net export and fiscal balance positions.

The upshot is that a slump in global risk appetite would undermine developing countries' growth prospects.

What's more, any shift to higher pandemic spending would lead to a rise in bond yields, causing financial conditions to tighten even further. This would be especially problematic for countries with large external financing costs like Ghana and Turkey.

On the other hand, concerns it may also stall the rebound in advanced economies could delay the normalization of monetary policy by the US Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank, which would ease the pressure on developing countries to adopt more aggressive monetary tightening.

The COVID-19 crisis continues to expose the disparity in fiscal and monetary firepower available to developed vs. developing economies. And while the severity of Omicron remains in doubt, this latest variant risks further undermining global growth convergence. (*IPS*)

**Alexander Kozul-Wright** is a consultant for the Third World Network.



# *Climate change: Adapt for the future, not the past*

To adapt to climate change, developing countries need to diversify their economies to forge resilience – and require multilateral support to do so.

by Anis Chowdhury and Jomo Kwame Sundaram

Funding for developing countries to address global warming is grossly inadequate. Very little finance is for adaptation to climate change, the urgent need of countries most adversely affected. Also, adaptation needs to be forward-looking rather than only addressing accumulated problems.

Climate change poses an existential threat, especially to poor countries with little means to adapt. Rich countries' failure to deliver promised financial support has only made things worse. COVID-19 has dealt another knockout blow, worsened by rich countries' "health apartheid".

The COP26 deal from the recent UN climate change conference was undoubtedly a "historically shameful dereliction of duty" and "nowhere near enough to avoid climate disaster". Glasgow's failure shows up lack of real progress and inadequate policy responses. Worse, no significant new resources came with the "Glasgow Suicide Pact".

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)'s *Trade and Development Report 2021* laments rich countries' unwillingness to address grave challenges facing developing countries. After all, Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development was in trouble even before COVID-19.

Climate policy responses involve both mitigation and adaptation. Mitigation seeks to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions through more efficient energy use and by using renewable energy instead of fossil fuels. Adaptation involves strengthening resilience and protection to minimize adverse effects on human lives.

National adaptation needs get far less international funding than mitigation for the world. Thus, poor countries struggle alone addressing global warming mainly caused by others. Adaptation challenges

are also wide-ranging, due to varying country vulnerabilities.

## **Risky approach to risk**

Governments have been advised to reduce vulnerability to shocks by improving data and risk assessment. Most measures to strengthen resilience use conventional financial risk management methods. These seek to better protect existing assets, and to provide temporary financial support when shocks happen.

Climate adaptation is thus addressed via disaster risk assessment, early warning systems, improved ecosystem management and better social safety nets. But the approach hardly distinguishes climate change from other risks.

Relying on past experience, the conventional approach is hardly forward-looking in addressing new challenges. Recommended measures tend to deploy scarce resources to address past and current effects of climate change.

Focusing on current vulnerabilities enables adapting to extant climate threats. This may provide some temporary resilience and relief. But it does not prepare for new threats. Thus, the approach ignores future problems, not providing much protection from or reducing vulnerability to emerging threats.

Counting on pricing and other market techniques for climate adaptation risk assessment is also limiting. The approach tends to focus on what is predictable and incremental, rather than on what is more uncertain and systemic.

With its roots in financial risk management, the approach favours returning to some assumed norms of normality and stability. It thus rejects considering new possibilities, including a more dynamic approach to sustainable

transformation.

Furthermore, returning to "normal" for many communities implies exploitation and precarity. Preservation and coping are also favoured by the approach. Typically, these are hardly enough to address the complex challenges faced. Worse, they may inadvertently cause maladaptation.

## **Avoid maladaptation**

A transformative approach to climate risk is needed instead. The only lasting solution may be to reduce developing countries' reliance on climate-sensitive activities, such as cattle breeding, through far-reaching changes to create more resilient economies.

This requires moving away from de-risking in favour of a more integrated and systemic approach to diversify economies for greater resilience. More diversified economies are more supportive of sustainable development, and much less vulnerable or likely to be disrupted by external shocks.

In recent years, this has been clear from the greater vulnerability of primary-export-dependent economies to economic shocks originating elsewhere. But it is also true of climate shocks. Thus, climate adaptation requires a new vision of common goals, instead of merely avoiding risks and worst-case scenarios.

Thus, climate adaptation in the Global South needs to be addressed through development. Moving from de-risking to diversification requires a developmental state committed to "green" industrial policy – involving investment and technology – to do so.

Diversification involves two cumulative processes working in tandem. First, shifting from primary production to manufacturing and higher-value services. Second, moving resources from less to more capital-intensive activities.

Developing countries have to pursue sustainable development, keeping emissions and resource consumption within ecological limits. This requires economic diversification, raising productivity and improving social conditions.

Such new transformation strategies must recognize ecological and climate constraints. Developing-country policymakers have limited means to address such challenges. With uneven neoliberal globalization, they are also handicapped by institutional weaknesses,

e.g., even in mobilizing domestic resources.

### Multilateralism key

Some rich countries – e.g., the UK and Australia – have cut their aid budgets and not deployed their unused Special Drawing Rights to help developing countries. They have done little to encourage private creditors to enable developing countries to invest to develop out of the multiple crises they face.

Thus far, measures for debt relief are very modest and grossly inadequate, “kicking the can down the road”. Deferring debt simply means borrowings are due to be paid later, as compound

interest accumulates. Meanwhile, debt burdens continue to grow.

The UNCTAD report warns that measly climate funding is accelerating global warming, undermining prospects for decarbonizing the world. It highlights the need for proactive multilateralism and support for developing countries to address the climate- and pandemic-induced crises.

“Global challenges clearly require multilateral responses.” But so far, only the IMF has provided some real relief by cancelling debt service obligations for 28 countries – worth \$727 million – between April 2020 and October 2021.

The end of the first Cold War undermined the felt need for UN-

led multilateralism. If US President Biden really seeks to emulate President Roosevelt, he can begin by reviving the UN-led multilateralism FDR envisaged, instead of recklessly pursuing the new Cold War favoured by neoconservatives in his team. (IPS)

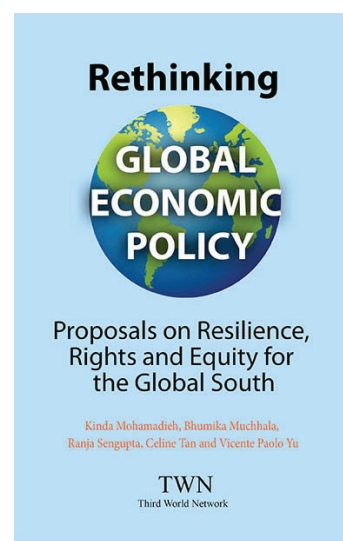
**Anis Chowdhury**, Adjunct Professor at Western Sydney University (Australia), held senior United Nations positions in New York and Bangkok. **Jomo Kwame Sundaram**, a former economics professor, was UN Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, and received the Wassily Leontief Prize for Advancing the Frontiers of Economic Thought in 2007.

# Rethinking Global Economic Policy

## Proposals on Resilience, Rights and Equity for the Global South

By *Kinda Mohamadieh, Bhumika Muchhala, Ranja Sengupta, Celine Tan and Vicente Paolo Yu*

The COVID-19 crisis has thrown into stark relief the inequities and iniquities of an international economic order that consigns the Global South to the development margins while augmenting the power of rich countries and firms. Redressing this demands a bold multilateralism to support public health and economic recovery in developing countries and, beyond this, an overhaul of the unjust structures underpinning the global economy. This report surveys a myriad of areas – from trade, debt and public finance to investment and intellectual property rights – where fundamental reform and rethink of international policy regimes is urgently required for the developing world to emerge stronger and more resilient from the present turmoil.



Available at <https://twm.my/title2/books/pdf/Rethinking%20Global%20Economic%20Policy.pdf>