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Global aid for trade efforts vital for boosting development, Ban says at review meeting



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses the WTO's Third Global Review of Aid for Trade in Geneva

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[Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon today appealed to donors to maintain their support for “Aid for Trade” efforts to help developing countries, especially the poorest, accelerate development and benefit from global economic growth.

Aid for Trade is an initiative launched by the World Trade Organization (WTO) six years ago to help developing countries, particularly the least developed, develop the necessary trade-related skills and infrastructure to carry out and benefit from WTO agreements and to expand their trade.

“Aid for Trade reflects the international community’s commitment to help developing countries participate actively in the world economy and to ensure that these countries can also gain from world growth,” Mr. Ban said in his [remarks](#) to WTO’s Third Global Review of Aid for Trade, held in Geneva.

He said that Aid for Trade is a crucial building block of the global partnership for development, and applauded the international community’s efforts to mobilize resources under this category. Today Aid for Trade accounts for as much as one-third of official development assistance (ODA).

“However, all is not well,” Mr. Ban pointed out. “As we all know, this is a time of economic uncertainty. Budgets are tight. But difficult fiscal conditions are no excuse for letting up our efforts; they underscore the need for collective action.”

Noting that the annual rate of increase for Aid for Trade has slowed sharply, he urged the donor community not to fall short of the present level of Aid for Trade.

“Going forward, it is also essential to ensure that the Aid for Trade does not displace existing development assistance,” he added.

The Secretary-General also stressed the need to pay attention to the unique needs of the least developed countries (LDCs) and make sure they are not left behind. Also, he emphasized the need to fully utilize the potential for Aid for Trade to advance food and nutrition security.

“In all our efforts, let us remember that meeting our development goals is ultimately about building self-sufficiency and helping people help themselves,” he stated.

“Together, let us advance our shared goal of ensuring that the international system works best for those who need it most.”

Mr. Ban also noted that in an age of integration and interconnection, initiatives such as Aid for Trade have to be looked at along with other interlinked issues such as climate change, food crisis, global health and gender empowerment, as well as other development objectives, including the anti-poverty targets known as the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)).

Next year’s UN conference on sustainable development, to be held in Rio de Janeiro in June, will provide an opportunity to do just that, said the Secretary-General, who has made sustainable development the world body’s top priority for this year.

Sustainable development was also a topic of talks held today between Mr. Ban and Micheline Calmy-Rey, the President of Switzerland. They discussed the work of the Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability, of which the President is a member, and Mr. Ban was pleased to hear that the Panel’s work is progressing, his spokesperson said.

The panel, set up last August, is tasked with finding ways to lift people out of poverty while tackling climate change and ensuring that economic development is environmentally friendly.

They also discussed assistance to the new nation of South Sudan, Swiss support for peacebuilding initiatives in Africa and Haiti and the Swiss role in various mediation efforts.

The two-day Global Review of Aid for Trade, which opened on Monday, is aimed at assessing what has been achieved since the initiative was launched in Hong Kong in 2005. The forum brings together senior officials from the WTO, the World Bank, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), as well as dozens of international trade organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and private corporations.

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