

Seminar
‘Mega Regional Trade Agreements and their Impacts on the Indian Economy’
Wednesday, 22 April 2015
Venue: FICCI, Federation House, Tansen Marg, New Delhi



The seminar on ‘Mega Regional Trade Agreements and their Impacts on the Indian Economy’ was organized by IPE global in partnership with CUTS International and FICCI with the aim to disseminate the findings of the study ‘External Preferential Trade Agreements and the Indian Economy (EPTA)’ report carried out by CUTS International. Delivering the welcome address, Mr Pradeep S Mehta, Secretary General, CUTS International pointed out that mega FTAs will create building blocks for higher standards that over time will be transferred to the WTO. In his opening remarks, Mr Sunil Mitra, Director, IPE Global (Team Leader, Knowledge Partnership Programme) noted that India has weak institutions and needs to put in place a strategy in order to align with mega PTAs and respond strategically to its impacts. He also pointed out that the government of India must set up a regulatory policy framework to adapt to the new rules proposed in mega FTAs and work closely with Industry. Sujata Mehta, Secretary (ER), Ministry of External affairs, Government of India expressed the view that India needs to play a more proactive role in the new economic architecture and Indian industry needs to focus on improving product standards, manufacturing and services delivery to remain competitive in the new global market of mega PTAs. Dr A Didar Singh, Secretary General, FICCI who moderated the first session, pointed out that Indian manufacturers should embrace the “Zero Defect, Zero effect” slogan that qualifies the Make in India campaign.

Presenting the study findings Mr. Bipul Chatterjee, Deputy Executive Director, CUTS International, noted that upcoming mega FTAs will pose various challenges such as trade

standards, subsidies, trade facilitation, and agriculture market access and India would need to speed up its bilateral and multilateral trade relations to meet these challenges. He said that the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), to which India is a member, presents a strategic opportunity for India to respond to mega RTAs and upgrade its own standards. Mr. Ganesh Kumar, Professor at Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research, analysing the simulations suggested that trade diversion due to tariff reduction may not be as severe as anticipated. Mr. Arpit Bhutani, Observer at United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards, discussed how private standards from industry could be the new model for public standards and that close consultation between the government and other key stakeholders including industry will be the key in addressing the challenges of mega RTAs. Dr P Nayak, Secretary, Textiles Committee stressed the need for more mandatory standards. A very engaged audience used the Q&A section to present its concerns over this new generation of international trade rules and its impact on Indian businesses. More than 100 participants from Industry, trade chambers, and academics participated in the conference.