

even if the solution imposed had more to do with politics, as sometimes occurs, than with what is best for the environment and the situations and needs of other countries. Of course, there is little doubt that unilateral measures will be used in some instances. The issue is not whether this will happen, however, but whether it should be provided for, and thus encouraged, under the trade rules. It is argued here that this course would be neither desirable nor negotiable.

This does not mean to say that nothing needs to be done in the GATT/WTO on the trade and environment issue. In response to the valid concerns of the environmental community and others, more openness in the system and a better exchange of information are needed. It is also true that improvements could be made to provide more clear and predictable access to GATT exceptions for international environmental agreements (IEAs) that reflect broad international consensus on an environmental programme that includes otherwise GATT-inconsistent trade restrictions. This Paper addresses this issue in detail and suggests options for change. In addition, changes are also called for in the GATT/WTO to ensure that certain types of trade-related environmental measures do not unnecessarily disrupt trade, as is feared by the business community. There would be nothing to gain by a loss of trade due to avoidable impacts of such environmental measures, but quite a bit to be gained if trade is facilitated.

There will be much debate over these issues. But, at the end of the day, one thing is clear - the GATT/WTO should not become further entangled in environmental affairs. The international trading system cannot be used to arbitrate environmental policy decisions. Nor should it be called upon to enforce or police environmental standards or programmes that have not been accepted internationally. After all, the WTO will be nothing more than an organization bringing together for trade purposes the same governments that gather in other fora for environmental purposes. Those that are not in a position to move in a certain direction on environmental issues in those fora are unlikely to accept provisions under the WTO allowing the use of trade penalties aimed at forcing them to do so.

The role should, therefore, be support and non-interference, not environmental interventionism; fine-tuning the interface between environmental programmes and the trade rules, not creating blunt instruments. Ultimately, the WTO should be left to do what it is mandated to do and, in fact, does best - liberalize and safeguard the international trading system which, over time, will be its most important contribution to future generations.