

Some participants, including Roy Culpeper (North-South Institute) doubted the feasibility of achieving and sustaining the average Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of 7% per annum, as pledged in the *New Partnership for Africa Initiative*. Serieux added that it would be more useful to build capacity to grow rather than setting up artificial growth targets.

### **3. Trade Rules and Poverty**

Gauri Sreenivasan (Canadian Council for International Cooperation) said that trade should contribute to poverty eradication. Trade arrangements should aim to maintain sustainable livelihoods and respect democratic decision making. While the international trading system can play a positive role in linking national and global economies, harmonisation of global trade rules does not reflect poverty reduction and development needs. Differential treatment provisions are often weak, difficult to enforce, and have a short term-focus. Sreenivasan emphasised that the capacity of African states to participate in building trading regimes and making trade rules should be boosted.

Priorities for African development have been clearly articulated in the *New Partnership for Africa Initiative*. They include: agriculture, human development issues (health, education, skills development), and promoting diversification of production and exports. Sreenivasan pointed out that these priorities should be incorporated into trade policy. Attention should be paid to removing impediments to and developing strategies to build capacity for local and regional trade. The global trade agenda should appreciate the fact that some trade rules may actually hinder domestic development. For instance, the dumping of agricultural produce on domestic markets undermines local African producers. Special provisions to allow developing countries to support farmers should be made. While there was a positive outcome on TRIPS (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) in Doha regarding the protection of public health, the imports of generic drugs remain restricted. The officials at Doha addressed market access issues, but more work needs to be done. Some key issues, including how to diversify developing economies, are not on the table.

A point was made during the discussion that trade should not be the dominant discourse and that trade discussions should incorporate human rights issues. This approach should be accompanied by an understanding that special provisions/derogations have to be introduced in certain cases and that while international trade can be harmonised, it can not be entirely "free." Some participants added that some asymmetry in trade policy is required. Nevertheless, the dominant trade liberalisation approach has not changed as much in the recent past as approaches to capital deregulation have, for instance, and the notion that "one size fits all" continues to be a norm.

The need to go beyond the "market access" discussion was raised. Some participants pointed out that opening up Western/Northern markets to African products is insufficient because African producers can not compete with Western/Northern producers on an equal basis. First, capacity to invest should be enhanced and value added to products made in African countries.