ARTNeT 10th ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE:
REPORT AND QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Asia-Pacific Trade Economists' Conference: "Trade in the Asian century – delivering on the promise of economic prosperity"

22 and 23 September 2014, Bangkok, Thailand

The Asia-Pacific Trade Economists' Conference was organized to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade (ARTNeT) and to receive views and feedback from current ARTNeT members, partners, government focal points and other stakeholders about the role ARTNeT should play in trade policy formulation and the development of research capacity as ARTNeT goes forward into its next phase of operations.

The conference was held on 22 and 23 September 2014 at the headquarters of ESCAP in Bangkok and was supported by the ARTNeT core partners: IDRC, ESCAP, WTO, UNCATD and UNDP. Additionally, support was provided by ERIA, ALADI, OECD, and SEIBE in the form of organized sessions. The conference built on other ARTNeT conferences, symposia and other dissemination events held over the past decade. The conference was attended by 80 participants (32 from institutional members) who met over two days in plenary, organized and parallel sessions (final programme is attached). The organizing committee accepted 29 papers, which were presented in 8 parallel sessions and covered a diverse array of issues, ranging from food security, reforms in LDCs, to FDI and mega-regional blocs topics. Apart from one plenary sessions (on the second day) which focused on shaping a new world trade system for sustainable development, the remaining two plenary sessions were dedicated to examining the ARTNeT's contributions to date and to positioning it for successful future research and policy development in the region. This report summarizes discussion in the last plenary sessions, and readers are invited to consult the conference website to obtain more details of content of other sessions.

It was really wonderful to be present on this occasion. I enjoyed the proceedings and hope to do so in future years to come as well! You certainly deserve a special thank for organising the event and energising all of us to be actively involved in the ARTNeT.

- Dr. Ajitava Raychaudhuri, Jadavpur University

Following the conference, a **questionnaire of participants** was conducted to determine their experiences of the conference. The results of the survey are presented in the **Annex** to this report.

UNITED NATIONS
ESCAP
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Summary of discussions on "What do trade policymakers need to know about trade and what can ARTNeT do about it?"

This plenary session was organized as a round table discussion and involved four panelists, and a moderator. The discussion was framed by three broad questions, to which panelist brought perspectives from their respective backgrounds, ranging from an ARTNeT academic university member, to international and subregional organizations. The largest share of the discussion focused on identifying the agenda for future ARTNeT research. The three questions were:

1) What are the most important areas of future research?
2) How can new data and methods be best used, including through bringing together different research techniques?
3) What training and capacity building do researchers most need?

1. *Areas of future research*

Regarding the first question, the moderator suggested that major distinctive areas of research could comprise:

- **Analytical frameworks and topics**: For example, this could include defining a proper paradigm for understanding the role of trade and investment in development, and creating a balanced analytical focus between removing trade barriers and managing regulation motivated by public policy goals.
- **International cooperation/governance**: For instance, research could focus more on institutions, examining their architecture, substance and how to make participation more inclusive, including from developing countries.
- **Political economy:** There is a need for sharpening the arguments for openness by taking better account of a broader development context, identifying factors that create better environment, explaining constraints and getting sequencing and timing right. A deeper understanding of public attitudes is also needed.
- **Sustainability**: examining distributional and justice consideration, closing in onto meaning of inclusiveness, giving proper consideration to gender, the environment including climate change.

> *Since the establishment of ARTNeT it has provided a platform for researchers to conduct vigorous research on multilateral and regional trade issues … It has promoted the concept of evidence-based trade policymaking and created a platform for interaction among the policy makers and researchers …. I have always benefitted from participating in the events organized by ARTNeT. This time the arrangement has been excellent. I wish every success in future activities of ARTNeT.*
>
> *- Dr. Mostafa Abid Khan*
> *Director, Bangladesh Foreign Trade Institute (BFTI)*

Panelists then added further insights by posing several questions as potential areas of future research:

- Is acceptance of globalization inversely correlated with stages of development; it appears that rich countries favour globalization less than poorer countries?
- What can a solid state-of-the-art paper tell us about what we fully understand or do not on global value chains (GVCs)? Can better utilization of existing knowledge on GVCs lead to higher quality policy prescription on, for example, how we help SMEs integrate into GVCs?
- How can upgrading take place in GVCs given the supply restrictions in developing countries?
- What is the Internet of things and is it positive for the economy?

- How can winners and losers from trade be better identified and how they can be compensated.? How can the environment be included in this calculation?
- Need to look at the market for intermediate goods, previously, focus has been on the consumers as the main winners of import liberalization. With intermediate goods being focus of trade cost reduction (through trade facilitation measures), is that still the case?
- What are both the short and long term effects of liberalization?
- How do barriers to international trade affect internal trade?

2. New data and methods

The second broad question was to examine what new methods and data are needed to support the new areas of research. The panelists were asked to explore possible fusions of quantitative analysis (the methodology of choice for most trade economists), qualitative analysis and case studies. Panelists were also requested to examine what ARTNeT should be doing about data and access to data. The following points were made during the discussion:

The presentations were great and the guests were very interesting. The conference worked well at a substantive level and as a networking event. Thank you so much and I hope you will consider our participation next year as well!

- Julian Latimer Clarke, World Bank

- In general, data on merchandise trade is solid, timely and disaggregated sufficiently to allow analyses. In contrast, services trade data and so-called FATS data related to Mode 3 of delivery of services are not satisfactory. National governments/statistical bureaus should be encouraged to provide more timely data and in accordance with international standards.
- Due to lack of data on services trade, non-tariff measures, and trade facilitation, among others, researchers sometimes undertake their own collection of data using questionable methodologies. Better guidance on how to do survey-based collection of data (perception surveys) and how to work with it is needed; ARTNeT can play an important role in that.
- Collection of "qualitative information" is equally necessary, for example catalogues of all laws and regulations that are in place.
- Lessons from other social science disciplines should be used and cross-fertilization of academic fields can yield better collective knowledge.
- A manual is needed on how to do quantification of shadow valuation in the services sector.
- Databases that ARTNeT has produced are extremely useful for empirical research among young researchers as well as policy analysts in the region. However, recent obstacles in accessing databases due to web issues have impacted use. These problems must be urgently addressed.

3. Capacity building: for whom, by whom?

In order to help ARTNeT formulate its work in the next phase, panelists were asked to comment on how c*an capacity building, network building, training and education be attended to and what is ARTNeT's role? What was the balance after* 10 years; who else should be active in these fields; and what is the role of partnerships between ARTNeT institutional members, partners and with other international and national entities involved in research? The discussions raised the following points:

- There is a need for an annual technical (training) workshop updating researchers on current trends in research areas, methodology and sources of data.
- (Better) collaboration with relevant private sector entities which are engaged in capacity building and training could be productive.
- Training for policy-makers and ministers on how to do their own analytical thinking and data interpretation is needed. This is particularly important for foreign affairs officers.
- Collaboration with academic education institutions to improve curricula on international economic subjects should be undertaken. This could cover important areas that are not taught at all or not well enough, for instance the economics of the WTO agreements.
- Policymakers are not normally interested in the long-term horizon, therefore more analysis of the impacts of the political cycle on the quality of decisions is needed.
- To facilitate transfer of knowledge between research and policymaking circles, researchers need to think of the policy implications of their findings and how to express them in policy-friendly terms. Likewise policymakers need to think about better articulating and sharing their policy concerns and gaps in understanding. Research needs to have policy conclusions and recommendations.

For more information on the conference and to download the papers and presentations, please visit: http://www.unescap.org/events/asia-pacific-trade-economists-conference-trade-asian-century-delivering-promise-economic
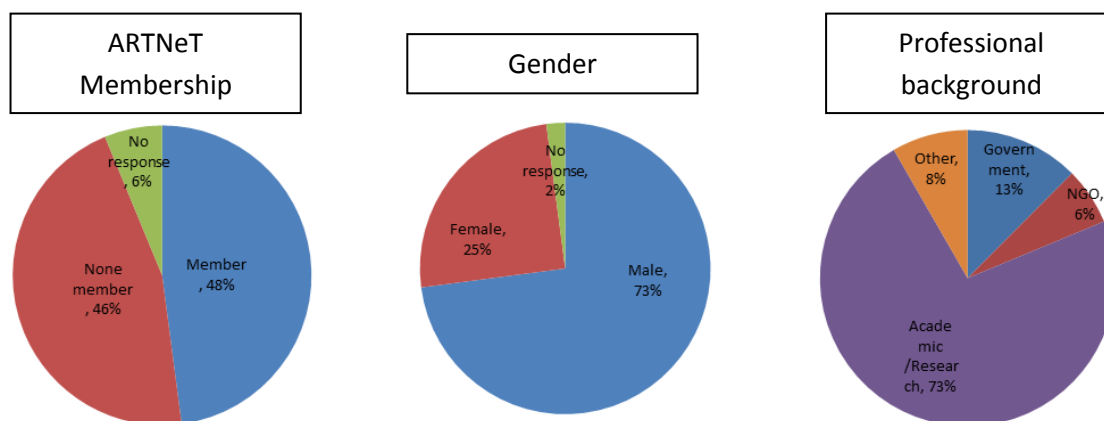
ANNEX: QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

To evaluate the conference and provide information useful to improving future events, ARTNeT Secretariat conducted a questionnaire among conference attendees. Key results were:

- Over 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the conference was relevant for them and their institution
- Over 95% felt that the conference had increased their knowledge of the issues.
- Over 90% of respondents ranked the quality of papers as high or very high

Breakdown of respondents

In total 48 participants completed the survey. These were composed as follows.

ARTNeT Membership

No response, 6%
None member, 46%
Member, 48%

Gender

No response, 2%
Female, 25%
Male, 73%

Professional background

Other, 8%
Government, 13%
NGO, 6%
Academic/Research, 73%

Questionnaire responses

1. Relevancy of the Conference

The theme of the conference is of relevance to my institution in particular