

*Press Note*

**CTIL and SAIELN Session on ‘Paradise Lost or Found? – The Post WTO International Legal Order (Utopian and Dystopian Possibilities)’**

Centre for Trade and Investment Law (CTIL) and South Asia International Economic Law Network (SAIELN) organized a session on ‘Paradise Lost or Found? – The Post WTO International Legal Order (Utopian / Dystopian Possibilities).’ This session was organized in light of the uncertainty surrounding the future of dispute settlement the WTO, and consequently the future of the multilateral trading system.

This session was based on a series of workshops conducted by Professor Colin Picker, Pro Vice Chancellor, South Western Sydney and Dean, School of Law, University of Wollongong (Australia). These workshops, conducted in the University of Tokyo and the Fletcher School, Tufts University earlier this year, examined hypothetical possibilities for a successor regime to the WTO. A third workshop is scheduled to be conducted in London later this year. The aim of the project undertaken by Prof. Picker is to bring leading academics in the field of International Economic Law to contemplate utopian and dystopian outcomes of a possible collapse of the Appellate Body of the WTO, and provide suggestions for an alternative regime.

The session began with a welcome address from Dr. James Nedumpara, Professor and Head, CTIL, who provided a brief background to the current crisis facing the WTO Appellate Body. This was followed by a keynote address by Prof. Picker, who shared insights from these workshops, the methodology of the studies, and some possibilities that were debated in them.

On the utopian side, possible reforms to the WTO, such as evolving rules to reflect the realities of new technologies, aligning RTAs with the multilateral system, and reforms to the treatment of goods and services were discussed. On the dystopian side, the possibility of taking lessons from the rules governing international investments were discussed. Further, using RTAs and PTAs to fill the void that would be created, or creating a plurilateral system to replace the multilateral system were discussed.

The session concluded with questions from the audience, regarding the problems with taking lessons from the investment world, and the disproportionate impact the collapse of the Appellate Body will have on the environment in developing countries. The vote of thanks was delivered by Ms. Akshaya Venkataraman, Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Trade and Investment Law.