



WORLD TRADE
ORGANIZATION

YönderMUN'26

World Trade Organization

Study Guide

Agenda Item:
Addressing Barriers Against
International Trade

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I. Letter from the Secretary General

II. Letter from the Under Secretary General

Esteemed Delegates,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to YönderMUN'26 and the WTO committee. Before mentioning anything else, I should thank the YönderMUN'26 team for their success in making this conference possible which I wholeheartedly believe will be incredible. With that said, I should specifically thank Egemen for inviting me to this conference. I really am not sure if I would have accepted anyone else's invitation at this point in time.

This will be my third year properly attending Model United Nations conferences and even though I am not able to give it much time due to my senior year, I hope that my experience and competence along with the tireless efforts of the conference team will ensure you have a great time throughout these three days.

I was able to bring many committees that I was very interested in to life personally but economics have always been my main passion and I have been seeking the opportunity to make a committee like this for the longest. I sincerely thank the conference team for allowing me to make this a reality and I assure you that I will not be boring you with extensive details that seem irrelevant to our committee.

The guide you are going to read is very direct in a sense that it explains the main subject you are to discuss these three days. With that said, it is also very brief in its core. In my personal opinion, among the committees that follow a General Assembly procedure, the most fun are the ones that give delegates room to debate and develop ideas. For this exact reason, every single one of this committee's subjects are as broad as they can be and I sincerely hope this allows for an environment in which you can cherish any ideas or debates as much as you want without being too limited by the committee and by the procedure.

With that said, I really cannot stress enough how excited I am for this committee and to meet you all. And, well, have fun with the guide.

Sincerely

Ediz Efe Dural

Your Under Secretary General

III. Introduction to the Committee

- What is WTO?

World Trade Organization is an intergovernmental organization that regulates and promotes international trade. The WTO and its 166 members make up over 95% of all global trade and GDP with its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

The WTO, however, doesn't only regulate and manage trade of goods but also trade of services and intellectual property among nations which makes it a very crucial entity in the economical environment of today's world.

- What does WTO do?

The WTO doesn't necessarily directly manage economic policies pursued by governments but rather serves as a platform in which member states discuss, negotiate and implement common rules upon international trade.

Perhaps the biggest advantage of WTO is its implemented rules reducing instability and unpredictability greatly while keeping consistency. It also serves as the monitoring body for any decisions taken.

WTO also serves as a dispute settlement platform when any conflict arises like those that will be mentioned in the following sections of this study guide.

It is crucial for delegates to understand the manner in which WTO operates to come up with solutions to given problems that are in line with the policies of this organization.

IV. National Protectionism

- Protectionism:

Protectionism and protectionist policies pursued by governments are collective interventions implemented by governments to protect local businesses from foreign competition, or to make domestic production more competitive against foreign production.

The motivation behind protectionist policies can vary. Some nations turn to interventionism and protectionism to protect domestic employment in specific industries while some implement them to increase government revenue. With that said, political influence by some producers are also among causes of protectionist policies due to lobbying efforts.

Keeping foreign competition out of a country or at least weakening it with protectionism usually causes increase of prices due to the decrease in competitiveness. With that said, protectionism still stays politically attractive to many nations even though it has nation-wide disadvantages. The benefits are often concentrated among some select producers while the costs are spread across many individuals and businesses which makes the advantages very clear while disadvantages may be hard to spot which also causes appeal among not just policy-makers, but also voters.

- Protectionism and Free Trade:

This guide isn't a full on economics textbook and I will not go into full details behind economic concepts behind trade. With that said, in order to understand and fix problems faced by nations in international trade, we need to understand why nations trade.

The fundamental idea behind trade lies in comparative advantage and specialization which basically means nations can increase total production by concentrating resources on activities where they have lower opportunity costs relative to other nations and trade for the rest from other nations that might have advantage in producing some other goods.

Although this sounds very simple and efficient on paper, the gains from trade do not spread equally among every worker, every business or every region. Overall production might increase but a factory might shut down because the economy benefits more from importing said good. This example shows us how the general economy might benefit from free trade but some individuals in a nation might have losses that a government might find valuable to protect.

Simply that instinct of protecting the local producer results in protectionism but it might have some other costs. Firstly, like mentioned, domestic prices go up which means individuals pay more for goods and businesses pay more for their inputs. Second problem arises when prolonged protectionism results in decreased competitive pressure and increase in inefficient protection as a result. Finally, what concerns our committee the most, extensive protectionism of one nation reduces trade opportunities for all others and the cost of protection extends beyond the protected industry in the protected nation.

With all these mentioned, it also should be considered that there aren't necessarily two ways of handling the situation. The governments can help industries adjust to foreign competition without permanently reducing efficiency of a whole sector.

- Conclusion:

In conclusion, from everything mentioned about protectionism, it is easy to understand how much it impacts international trade. You, as the delegates, should explore questions such as: Just how much protection is too much? Are protectionist policies justified and if so to what extent? What can WTO do to reverse any harm done to international trade by protectionist policies?

V. Question of Tariffs

- Tariffs:

To simply put, import tariffs are a protectionist instrument which allows the government to create competitive advantage to domestic producers. It is a protectionist policy that should be explored under a new section simply due to its relevancy in today's world.

Before moving on with different opinions upon tariffs, it should be understood that tariffs aren't simply taxes paid by foreigners which can be a general misconception. The collective economic burden of the tariffs are often shared between foreign producers and exporters, but also domestic consumers and importers.

- Arguments on Tariffs:

Cases in favor of tariffs often argue that they are tools to protect employment, developing domestic industries, raising government revenue and fixing any trade perceived as unfair by the people. They also might be used as tools in geopolitical interactions but more on that later.

Arguments that are against tariff implementations defend that tariffs often increase prices, reduce domestic consumption for individuals and efficiency for businesses and put less pressure on domestic producers which causes inefficiencies as mentioned in the protectionism section. Another idea against tariffs is that they are often implemented under the influence of lobbying by businesses that call for it to increase their profits easier in an environment in which they can act more freely.

With that said, it is important to understand that the same tariff can have strategic benefits and uses for some contexts and economically damaging in others depending on the impacted industries' importance, government's goals and influence etc.

- Trade Disputes:

Like previously mentioned, tariffs can be used as political instruments in geopolitical situations. The simple reason behind this is nations implementing tariffs that provoke other nations which retaliate by imposing their own tariffs on politically important goods. These situations often cause increased prices for both nations and in varying sectors and harm crucial supply chains which will be explored later on in the guide.

It should be considered that, at the end of the day, tariffs have economic implications whether you argue good or bad and their usage as political tools that escalate can cause a destructive cycle that harms many nations' economies. With that said, at this very point, it is crucial to decide priorities. These trade dynamics between nations can also be seen as political leverage that benefits national interests.

- Conclusion:

Considering everything that is mentioned upon the subject of tariffs, it is obvious that they are very influential in the international trade environment. Within this committee, you should debate whether tariffs are generally beneficial or not, should nations use them as political leverage or are they just damaging their local sectors, how can WTO keep the harm done to international trade by tariffs at the lowest and many other questions regarding this very relevant subject that affects billions of lives today.

VI. Geopolitical Instability

- Trade and Stability:

I am sure everyone has a general idea of why international instability has negative impacts on international trade. With that said, there might be some aspects that we aren't considering.

Predictability is one of the most important and perhaps the most fragile as a financial asset. Businesses that work on an international scale often base their long term investments on expectations about prices, regulations, transportation etc. It is very apparent how global instability can reduce predictability and reduce efficiency on those investments.

It is also important to consider how crucial infrastructure is to international trade and how it might get negatively impacted by a global conflict. When an international conflict arises, it often disrupts roads, ports, railways, shipping lanes and any other form of physical infrastructure that international commerce networks operate.

- Conflicts and Global Separation:

Apart from physical damages done to international trade, conflict often brings political issues to the table. Nations start implementing sanctions on each other and international trade networks start fracturing.

I have mentioned how tariffs can escalate to a destructive cycle that can harm industries in both nations so it shouldn't be hard to imagine what embargoes and other economic sanctions do to both domestic economies of involved countries and international trade in general.

Another problem that should be considered is fragmentation. Nations might go against their supposed economic interests to support their political interests and source investments and goods to and from politically aligned partners which polarizes the world and that, in turn, harms global trade. With that said, once again, it is important for nations to decide on their priorities since globalization isn't necessarily perfect and regionalization isn't necessarily the bane of international trade for all perspectives.

- Conclusion:

After all that, you, the delegates, should decide what can be done to protect individuals' interests while also protecting national interest. You should discuss if trade should be a separate subject from geopolitics, is that even possible and in both cases, what can WTO do to protect the integrity of international trade and interests of member nations.

VII. Critical Goods and Supply Chains

- Supply Chains:

Most goods that we consume on a regular basis aren't just made completely in one nation and delivered to us. In today's world, production is divided internationally with countries specializing in specific stages of production. Some countries extract raw materials from earth while some produce particular components and others assemble it. These are supply chains and they are crucial to the international economy.

This model has many advantages due to it allowing countries and businesses to exploit comparative advantages. Some nations have a lower opportunity cost of operating some stages of production relative to others while some have advantage in other stages which lower production cost and consumer prices. With that said, there can also be disadvantages which are our main subject.

- Importance of Stability:

Due to the production being as spread out as it is today, although international supply chains are very efficient, they can also be very vulnerable to external or internal changes. Disruption to one supplier can cause whole businesses to face issues and consumer price increases which makes stability for the supply chains very crucial.

Among the goods that reach the consumer, there are some that could be classified as critical goods which cause serious impact on welfare, healthcare, infrastructure, food systems, energy networks and so on with the disruption of their supply chains.

Nations or businesses usually pursue practices that minimize any disadvantages that can be brought by disruptions to international supply chains. Some strategically stockpile goods while some try full on domestic production for some goods. Although the latter of the two can be seen as the most efficient and guaranteed way of protecting economic interests, it still means sacrificing the benefits of comparative advantage and causing increased consumer prices.

- Conclusion:

Due to just how fragile some of these supply chains can be, WTO and you as its delegates should discuss ways to ensure the stability of said supply chains and ensure public welfare. The manner in which you do so, however, is completely up to your discussions and debates.

VIII. Developing Countries and International Trade

- Development:

The subject of developing economies is a committee subject by its own with a whole and rather new field of economics completely on it called development economics. With that said, as WTO delegates, you should discuss how trade can be implemented in the economy of these nations and how these nations can be integrated into international trade.

Access to international markets can allow developing economies to specialize and exploit their comparative advantage while attracting investment. It also allows them to expand their production beyond the domestic demand of their citizens by entering global chains and exporting their goods which allows them to further grow as an economy. The technological acquisitions also increase efficiency greatly.

Although its benefits are many, access to international markets doesn't automatically mean development for a developing nation. Limited capital, incompetent institutions, under-developed infrastructure and low human capital are all reasons that a developing nation might have a hard time sowing the full benefits of international trade.

With that said, international trade for developing countries is like a double edged sword since it also has the potential to possess several disadvantages. Premature liberalization of a nation exposes domestic production to foreign competition that is way more advantageous which results in domestic producers not being able to survive the competitive climate. This, in turn, makes the countries turn to protectionism, which makes them unable to benefit from said advantages of international trade which allows for a destructive cycle that these nations face.

- Integration:

Due to there being many advantages, disadvantages and barriers for developing countries and their interactions with international trade systems, these nations require specific systems that allow them to develop and be integrated into international trade. With that said, special treatments to developing nations aren't necessarily policies that are unanimously supported due to their discriminatory nature even though there are long term benefits for all in integrating developing nations to international trade systems.

- Conclusion:

With all that in mind, the WTO delegates should decide if the organization should support equal rules or equal opportunities for nations.

IX. Government Subsidies

- Subsidies in Domestic Economy:

To simply put, subsidies are financial support given to firms by governments. This is done to lower the firms' production costs by different ways such as tax advantages, grants, beneficial credits or other measures.

Subsidies can be useful to expand and support newly forming industries, increase employment, spark technological development, encourage environmental changes and so on. With that said, it is also important to consider that subsidies can be influenced by political lobbying efforts which make them controversial in legitimacy.

- Impacts on Trade:

Just like many protectionist policies I have previously mentioned, subsidizing domestic producers also has harmful implications for international trade. Subsidies can support production that wouldn't be competitive without them, cause international price distortions and even cause inequality in the domestic economy of a nation.

Another controversial aspect of subsidies is that it gives advantage to developed countries. Wealthy governments often possess great fiscal capacity that allows them to support domestic producers and create an uneven competition for international trade networks.

Even though said disadvantages are very much apparent regarding subsidies, there is also a very important advantage that should be considered which is environmental concerns. Supporting the integrity of

the environment doesn't usually bring short-term profit to any business so most businesses might be inclined to disregard it as a whole. Government subsidies that support positive improvement that might be under-appreciated by the market such as the environmental example are also important considerations regarding subsidies.

- Conclusion:

Due to subsidies being this impactful on international trade, it is once again the delegates' duty to decide upon their integrity, their advantages and disadvantages.

X. Labor Standards

- Labor Costs:

Labor costs are a very crucial part in producing goods. Wages, labor regulation laws, working conditions, education levels and living costs differ greatly from nation to nation and therefore affect the price of goods that require labor to produce in said nations.

Labor costs are very important not because they simply impact economies, but also because they impact the lives of people directly. Lower labor costs create legitimate comparative advantage for developing countries which attract investment, increase employment and support production. With that said, labor costs are also directly tied to the welfare of the individuals that live in said countries that should be considered.

Extremely low labor standards as a way to artificially lower labor costs and increase comparative advantage cause exploitation of laborers.

- Labor Standards:

Considering mentioned aspects of labor standards in nations' economies, there is an argument to be made for not promoting businesses or governments that lack basic laborer protections in international trade.

With that said, whether that concerns other nations or not should be debated within the committee.

It also should be considered that the subject of labor in international trade is a very sensitive one since any implemented restriction isn't only enforced upon said governments and businesses, but also the people they govern and employ.

- Conclusion:

Labor practices in the economy and their implications in international trade are very closely tied to many humans' living standards and therefore should be explored deeply within the committee. The delegates should discuss balancing legitimacy of practices and efficiency of them without disregarding human living conditions.

XI. Questions to be Addressed

- How should national protectionist policies interact with international trade?
- Are global tariffs justified and what can WTO do to revert any harm done to international trade due to it?
- What are measures that can be taken against the negative impacts of global conflicts on international trade?
- How can WTO ensure the stability and integrity of global supply chains?
- What should be the role of developing countries in international trade and what can be done to further integrate them into the system?
- How should government subsidies' impact on international trade be handled?
- How should the WTO approach the subject of labor standards and its implications to international trade?

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