



1st conference of the GTDF now taking place from 17-20 Sept. 2008!

The first high-level conference of the Geneva Trade and Development Forum has been rescheduled to 17-20 September 2008 to allow for a possible ministerial meeting at the World Trade Organization (WTO) in July. A new program will be published shortly.

The fact that Ministers are planning to meet in July under the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) at the World Trade Organization (WTO) is good news. Indeed, July seems to be the last moment to reach a final agreement before the summer break and the upcoming presidential elections in the United States.

The not so good news is that this development affects the Geneva Trade and Development Forum. Although the Forum is independent and not linked to the DDA, many participants in the Forum are either directly involved in the negotiations or are paying close attention to how they evolve. If a WTO ministerial meeting takes place in July, the minds and hearts of these participants will not be free to engage in the open discussions and out-of-the-box thinking that are crucial to achieve the goals of the Forum.

On the one hand, it is obvious that the objectives of the Forum can only be realized if it takes place outside the Doha negotiations. When we set the initial date for the Forum Conference, it was generally assumed that the DDA would either be terminated or be in deep freeze. Reality has brought neither. We have consulted our stakeholders on this issue; nearly all of them have argued in favor of postponing the date of the GTDF conference.

On the other hand, a great effort has already been invested to prepare the substance of the Conference. Many dedicated people have contributed to the work of the eleven theme groups. To keep this momentum, we have chosen the earliest possible date after the summer break to hold the Conference, taking into account the relevant international agenda and the availability of key people involved in the Forum.