

International Conference on:
"Trade Policies and Sustainable Development in the Arab Countries"
26-27 September 2012, University of Jordan
Amman- Jordan

Organized by the University of Jordan -WTO Chair Program

The conference provided an opportunity to get acquainted with the most contemporary economic issues such as international trade policies, international investment, aids, regional integration, WTO system, trade competitiveness and the role of the international trade in development and reducing poverty.

The conference gave the researchers from Jordan and the Arab countries the opportunity to provide and present theoretical and empirical research in the areas of trade policy and the role of the World Trade Organization in economic development. The conference also aimed to increase the interaction between the academics and the practitioners to better understand the effects of globalization on socio-cultural, economic and technological dimensions on developing countries in general and the Arab countries in particular.

Many researchers and academics from inside and outside the Kingdom participated in research papers that covered all the themes of the conference and contributed to reach a set of conclusions and recommendations at the end of the conference.

The following was the final statement of the conference:

Participants have noted that the achievements of the Arab countries during the last five decades were not satisfactory, given the huge available resources and compared to the achievements of other similar countries and regions. This has raised a question among the participants about reasons stood behind this poor performance and how overcome the problem. The discussion of the research papers and their results have built a consensus among participants on the following conclusions of the conference:

1- Economic reform process should be continued and intensified in Arab countries especially in the area of trade liberalization in order to overcome the ongoing economic crises and to promote economic recovery and growth.

2 - Participants have agreed on the importance role of intra-Arab trade in promoting economic development and poverty alleviation. Therefore countries must work harder to remove all international trade's obstacles, especially among Arab countries. They must also upgrade the current unsatisfactory regional economic integration to expand benefits of developments on all peoples of the region.

3- Participants were aware of the negative effects of trade liberalization and economic growth on economic equality. Therefore, public authorities should intervene to minimize the distributional negative effects of liberalization, particularly in the following areas:

- Strengthening domestic health and safety standards
- Use domestic fiscal policies to reduce economic and social inequality
- Take action needed to prevent the exhaustion of national resources and environment damage
- take policies needed to control chronic trade imbalances.

4 – Participants has noted that the challenges facing Arab countries in light of the rapidly changing regional and international environment cannot be resolved by trade reform only, there must be a coordination and harmony between all the other economic policies, including monetary, financial and foreign exchange rate policies. On the other hand, in the light of the development in the Arab countries “Arab spring “ reform process must be

expanded to include political, institutional and democratic dimensions along with economic reform in order to have the stability and transparency needed for sustainable development.

5 – Finally, decision makers must keep in mind the dynamic nature of the reform process, and therefore should review and adjust policies according to the changing environment.