

Policy Dialogue Seminar

From Turmeric to Technology: Opportunities & Challenges for Trade & Investment between South Asia and Australia

IDLO Asia Pacific Regional Centre



On May 27, **IDLO's Asia Pacific Regional Center** in Sydney held a one-day policy dialogue seminar trade and investment between South Asia and Australia, bringing together government trade representatives from Australia, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, as well as trade lawyers, academics, organizations and individuals with an interest in the area.

The policy dialogue was held in collaboration with the **High Commission of Bangladesh** in Canberra and the **Consulates General of Pakistan** and **Sri Lanka** in Sydney.

The policy dialogue was an opportunity to consider the state of trade and investment between South Asia (especially Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) and Australia and ways in which such trade and investment may be enhanced. Participants exchanged their views, discussed challenges and opportunities, presented new potential areas for trade and investment, and drew attention to the key issues which need to be addressed in order for both sides to take full advantage of current and future opportunities.



Relevant issues that arose during discussions included:

- The growth of China and India, as well as the bilateral economic relations with Australia, and the implications for trade between South Asian countries and Australia;
- International Aid as a stimulant/facilitator for trade;
- Australia's decision not to engage in new Free Trade Agreements in the foreseeable future and the implications for trade with South Asian countries (in particular Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka)

Speakers and participants included:

- Mr Mack Williams, former Australian Ambassador to Bangladesh, the Philippines, and the Republic of Korea, and current President of the Australian Institute for International Affairs, New South Wales Branch;
- Mrs Gothami Indikadahena, Consul General of Sri Lanka;
- Mr Azam Mohammed, Consul General of Pakistan;
- Mr Mohammed Azharul Huq, Bangladeshi Commercial and Economic Counselor to Australia;
- Dr Dilip Dutta, Associate Professor in Economics and Director of the South Asian Studies Group, University of Sydney;
- Ms Rachel Wilson, Deputy State Director, New South Wales Office, Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade;
- Mr Iain Sandford, Deputy Director, International Trade Group, Minter Ellison Lawyers.

An important outcome of the dialogue was that the representative of the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade took note of the concerns of the government trade representatives of Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, for consideration by the relevant divisions of the Department.

All participants highly appreciated the opportunity offered by IDLO to get together and constructively discuss policy issues with relevant counterparts and experts.

The policy dialogue seminar was sponsored by **Securrency International Pty Ltd** and **EPL International Pty Ltd**.

