

Reporting from the WTO in Geneva.

Derick Blaauw

Derick Blaauw, Drs Anmar Pretorius and Sonja Grater accompanied the NWU's WTO chair holder (Prof Wilma Viviers) to the 16th WTO Public Forum in Geneva, Switzerland. The annual Public Forum is the WTO's flagship event according to their web site. It provides a unique platform for heads of state and leading global businesspeople, academics and non-governmental organisations to come together and discuss some of the major trade and development issues of the day. Over 1,500 participants attend the Forum each year. The 2016 Forum specifically was an opportunity to discuss how a wider range of individuals and businesses can participate in the trading system and how WTO rules can help to ensure everyone benefits from trade.

The panel of speakers at the opening plenary session of the WTO's 2016 Public Forum emphasized that an agenda for inclusive trade focusing on the needs of small business owners and more vulnerable sectors of society will be essential for ensuring continued public support for open markets. The session on the 27th of September organised by the WTO Institute for Training and Technical Co-operation (ITTC) Economic Research and Statistics Division fitted into this theme. The session was framed as: WTO Trade policy and poverty reduction: cases studies from WTO Chairs. The papers and case studies are part of broader research collaboration between the WTO and the World Bank. Here Derick Blaauw represented a paper entitled: *The impact of the recycling industry on poverty levels in South Africa's informal economy: a case study of waste pickers in Pretoria*. The paper was authored by Derick Blaauw, Anmar Pretorius, Rinie Schenck and Wilma Viviers. The paper concluded that although street waste pickers form the first link in the recycling chain, they are left vulnerable as the income from waste picking is insufficient to lift these people out of poverty. Yet some waste pickers display a surprising degree of entrepreneurial resilience and even pride at being able to independently make an honest living. A new policy position needs to be adopted which will help street waste pickers escape the socio-economic twilight zone in which they are currently trapped and be recognised for their important contribution to cities' waste management systems. Other speakers were Lucas Ferraz (Professor of Economics, São Paulo

School of Economics (EESP) from Getúlio Vargas Foundation (FGV), Brazil); Pinar Artiran (Asst. Professor (Private International Law), Bilgi University Faculty of Law, Istanbul) and Mr Robert Koopman, Director, Economic Research and Statistics Division (ERSD).

On the 29th Dr Grater was invited as a panellist on the session organised by the North-West University, TRADE research entity and the WTO Chair at the NWU. This session was devoted to sharing the results from the North-West University's TRADE (Trade and Development) research entity and the ICTSD's on-going work on services and sustainable and inclusive economic development in LDCs and LICs. Topics which will be addressed include the linkages between services and sustainable development, the relationship between services and gender outcomes, and the linkages between service-orientated SMEs and sustainable development objectives. The introductory remarks were handled by Wilma Viviers, Director, TRADE (Trade and Development) research focus area, North-West University. The other panellists were Nicholas Frank, Programme Officer, ICTSD; Sonja Grater, Senior lecturer and researcher, North-West University and Julia Lipowiecka, Independent Consultant

The Public Forum stimulated debate and acts as platform for voices to be heard. Only by putting words into action will Forums such as this escape the accusation of mere talk and no action, frequently levelled at such gatherings.