

The Hope for Gains and the Reality of Loss

In 2005, the Third World Studies Center (TWSC) launched a policy dialogue series on “The Decade-Long Membership of the Philippines in the World Trade Organization (WTO).” This five-part lecture series generated issues, concerns, and debates among members of the academe, nongovernmental organizations as well as government functionaries on the costs of benefits of the country’s membership in the WTO. Topics covered ranged from the gains, losses, and prospects of the country on the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA), its commitments to the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), and the country’s negotiating strategy in the 2005 WTO Ministerial Meeting in Hong Kong.

Inspired by the richness of the discussions in this policy dialogue series, the TWSC felt it was pertinent to follow this up with in-depth researches which produced as one of its outputs the articles contained in this volume of *Kasarinlan*. These articles, we believe, would address the lack of literature on these topics. These researches underwent different stages of writing as well as funding and for this, we wish to express our deep appreciation to the following: Senator Antonio Trillanes IV for providing seed money for this project; the Center for Integrative and Development Studies and the Office of the Vice-President for Academic Affairs of the University of the Philippines (UP) for the research fund for the policy papers “Philippine Agriculture and Intellectual Property Rights and the WTO (1995-2005)”; the UP System through the Creative and Research Scholarship Program as administered by the Office of the Vice-President for Academic Affairs for the research “An Inquiry into the Negotiating Strategy of the Philippines in the World Trade Organization (1995-2005)”; and the Outright Research Grant of the Office of the UP Diliman Chancellor as administered by the Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Research and Development for the “Research-Publication on the Decade-long

Membership of the Philippines in the World Trade Organization, 1995-2005.”

The present volume, “Philippines in the WTO,” comes fifteen years after *Kasarinlan*’s issue (vol. 9, no. 4 [1994]) with the theme “General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT): Defining the Discourse.” The 1994 *Kasarinlan* issue—of which some articles are reprinted in this issue’s special section—discussed the major contending positions in the GATT debate, particularly on the issue of protectionism versus liberalization and their impact on the Philippine labor, peasant, and industry sectors among others. Such debates were reassessed in this set of articles on the impact of the WTO in the country ten years after the ratification of the Uruguay Round trade agreement.

Maria Dolores Bernabe and Sharon M. Quinsaat, in particular, looks at the “Philippine Agriculture under the World Trade Organization, 1995-2005: Gains, Losses, and Prospects.” They argue that the benefits which were to accrue from the AoA were not able to live up to expectations mainly because they were based on faulty arguments. Moreover, there is a need for a more comprehensive strategy of negotiations as well as drastic policies that will counteract the adverse effects of an unregulated and liberalized trade regime.

The article of Zuraida Mae D. Cabilo, “Philippine Intellectual Property Rights Under the World Trade Organization (1995-2005): Implementing the Flexibilities under a TRIPs-Plus Commitment,” highlights the same concern as Bernabe and Quinsaat’s article, that is, how one can make the Philippine TRIPs commitments more beneficial to the public. In general, TRIPs at the moment seems to be benefiting the industrialized countries. Cabilo, in her paper, however, argues that there are flexibilities in the TRIPs agreement that the government has to take advantage of to institute changes, to make this intellectual property system more responsive to the people’s needs.

And lastly, my own contribution, “‘Popularizing’ Technocratic Decision-making: The Formulation of the Philippine Negotiating Position in the WTO Agreement on Agriculture,” highlights how civil society and social movements have challenged the executive monopoly of technocratic decision-making on WTO negotiations—a managerial monopoly premised on the neoliberal paradigm. This process has been challenged by the Department of Agriculture’s creation of the Task Force on the WTO Agreement on Agriculture (Re)negotiations whereby civil-society actors and technocrats have to negotiate and come up with

mutually acceptable terms. The paper highlights what conditions have made this possible.

These articles, hopefully, will not only foreground the issues and concerns of the Philippine membership in the WTO since 1995 but will also provide insights on how the country can move about strategically in an international economic arena where the gains will outweigh the losses. ❀

Starting this issue, Joel F. Ariate Jr. will be the managing editor of *Kasarinlan*. We also would like to welcome two new associate editors, Elinor May K. Cruz and Miguel Paolo P. Reyes.

As I end my term as director of the Third World Studies Center on April 30, 2010, and consequently as editor of *Kasarinlan*, may I please take this occasion to express my deep appreciation to all of the members who have served in the journal's editorial board and editorial staff since May 2004. *Kasarinlan* would not have been where it is today without all the support and commitment you have given to this endeavor. May I also please take this opportunity to welcome Maria Ela L. Atienza, as the incoming director of the TWSC and editor of the journal. May she also have the same opportunities which you have given me in pushing for the further improvement of *Kasarinlan* in producing cutting-edge articles in the various fields of social sciences and disciplines in the Third World. Thank you.