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Comparative Regional Integration Studies

## Re-thinking the role of regionalism: Perspectives from Asia and the Americas

*Round-table organised jointly by the  
European General Studies Department, College of Europe, and  
United Nations University - Comparative Regional Integration Studies*

College of Europe, 13 April 2011  
Room E, Dijver 11, Bruges campus

### Programme

- 14:00            **Welcome**  
*D. Hanf*, Director, European General Studies, College of Europe
- 14:10            **Introduction**  
*P. Sauvé*, Visiting Professor at the College of Europe, Deputy Managing Director and Director of Studies at the World Trade Institute, University of Bern
- 14:15            *R. Echandi*, Director of the International Investment Initiative at the World Trade Institute, University of Bern
- 14:45            *C. Dupont*, Professor of International Relations at the Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva
- 15:15            **Comments and discussion**  
  
Moderated by *Ph. De Lombaerde*, Associate Director UNU-CRIS  
  
*S. Woolcock*, Programme Director for the Masters in International Political Economy at the London School of Economics, Director of the International Trade Policy Unit at LSE, as well as Associate Research Fellow at UNU-CRIS  
*Ch. Kiener*, Assistant to the Deputy Director-General, DG Trade, European Commission
- 15:45            Questions and Answers
- 16:25            **Conclusion**

Since the 1950s, analysts of international trade have debated the form, role, place and impact of regional economic integration. These discussions have long been framed around the controversial issue of the relationship between global and regional regulations dividing the scholarly community between those viewing regionalism as a threat (at least potentially) to global trade liberalization and those viewing it as a facilitating dynamic. The debate has mainly focused on the potential economic effects preferential trade agreements (PTAs) may have in artificially creating or diverting trade and investment flows, as well as potential spill-over effects that such events may have on world welfare. This seminar revisits these issues and looks at them from two distinct regional perspectives - the Americas and South-East Asia.

**Roberto Echandi**, Director of the International Investment Initiative at the World Trade Institute, University of Bern, will argue that to appraise preferential trade agreements exclusively in terms of such potential macro-economic effects is reductionist and can lead to incomplete and misleading conclusions about the interaction between regionalism and multilateralism. It is essential that political and other non-economic considerations be taken into account to properly understand and ponder the advantages and disadvantages that PTAs may have for participating countries and the international community as a whole. Further, analysis of regionalism in developing countries is often undertaken by scholars who may not be fully familiar with the political economy of trade liberalization in developing economies. The speaker will present a “view from within”, and use the case of regionalism in the Americas to advance new ideas and analytical perspectives to demonstrate the positive role that regionalism is playing in the process of fostering multilateral trade liberalization in the long term.

In his presentation, Professor **Cédric Dupont** from the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva will use the case of regionalism in South-East Asia, and the Asia Pacific more broadly, to nurture new ideas on the role of regionalism in a world marked by multiple sources of trade regulation. In terms of regional integration dynamics, the Asia Pacific region has witnessed significant change within APEC in the 1990s and potentially within ASEAN over the past decade. Yet as most analysts have shown, change has often been more visible in words than in practice. Prof. Dupont’s presentation marks an effort to think outside the box and to link formal and normative considerations through the notions of justice and legitimacy drawn from the work of the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur. He posits that “traditional” regional organizations should not be viewed as restrictive clubs delivering private benefits to their members but rather as platforms for the supply of regional public goods, through integration and cooperation efforts, providing benefits to members and non-members alike in the process. With additional uncertainty linked to security concerns, such platforms bring comfort to states and offer solutions without legally binding and enforceable commitments. The proliferation of bilateral PTAs implies that such weak instruments of cooperation are becoming inadequate, prompting the move towards more ambitious integration plans, yet without any discernable adjustment in institutional machinery. Under such conditions, regional platforms appear doomed to remain parallel arrangements that will have only an indirect effect on the liberalization process in the region.

The presentations will be followed by comments from two discussants: **Dr Stephen Woolcock**, Programme Director for the Masters in International Political Economy at the London School of Economics, Director of the International Trade Policy Unit at LSE, as well as Associate Research Fellow at the Comparative Regional Integration Studies Programme of the United Nations University

(UNU-CRIS) in Bruges, and **Mr Christophe Kiener**, Assistant to the Deputy Director-General, DG Trade, European Commission.

The seminar will be chaired by **Dr Philippe De Lombaerde**, Deputy Director of UNU-CRIS, Bruges, and **Mr Pierre Sauvé**, Deputy Managing Director and Director of Studies at the World Trade Institute (WTI), in Berne, Switzerland, Visiting Professor at the College of Europe, Bruges, and Academic Advisor, LL.M. Programme on International Economic Law and Policy (IELPO), Faculty of Law, University of Barcelona.

### **Biography of the Speakers**

**Roberto Echandi** is a member of the Faculty and Director of the International Investment Initiative at the World Trade Institute (WTI) of the University of Bern, and a member of the Faculty of the Masters in International Economic Law and Policy (IELPO) at the University of Barcelona. Appointed Ambassador of Costa Rica to Belgium, Luxembourg and the European Union (2007-2010), during the same period he also was the Chief Negotiator of Costa Rica to the negotiations of the Association Agreement between the European Union and Central America. He has also served as Costa Rica's lead negotiator in services and investment in the US-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Trade of Costa Rica. For more than a decade he also served as leader of Costa Rican delegations to multiple trade and investment bilateral and regional negotiations. Ambassador Echandi has also been Adjunct Professor of Law, Visiting Scholar and Fellow at the Institute for International Economic Law (IIEL) of the Georgetown University Law Centre, in Washington D.C. He has also served as Director-General for International Trade at the Ministry of Foreign Trade of Costa Rica and as Legal Advisor to the Appellate Body Secretariat of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Geneva, Switzerland.

**Cédric Dupont** is Professor of International Relations at the Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva. He is a Senior Research Fellow of the Berkeley Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Study Center (BASC) at the University of California at Berkeley and an Associate Editor for Europe of the journal *Business and Politics*. He has written extensively on regional integration developments in Western Europe, on domestic-international linkages in international negotiations and on game-theoretic modelling in political science. His current research focuses on the political economy of trade and finance, on the governance of world and regional integration processes and on regional integration in Asia and the Pacific.