



## PRESS RELEASE

### The Yusuf A. Sayigh Development Lecture: Trade Agreements and Their Impact on the Development Project

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*Wednesday, 2 December 2015.* Academics and representatives of the public, private and civil sectors gathered at MAS' premises in Ramallah to hear the seventh annual memorial Yusuf A. Sayigh lecture on development. Dr. Nabeel Kassis, MAS Director General, opened the meeting, briefing the audience on the idea behind the lecture, saying that this seventh lecture comes within an annual tradition that MAS has established in honor of the late influential Palestinian economist Dr. Yusuf Sayigh and his contributions to promoting development. Dr. Kassis extended his sincere thanks to Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) and PADICO Holding for their support of the event.

Mr. Raja Khalidi, an economic and development expert, gave a brief talk on the achievements of Dr. Yusuf Sayigh, who left as a legacy a sizable body of research to national and global economic issues. As a leading figure among the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Arab economists, Dr. Sayigh had a development footprint in both theory and practice. Dr. Sayigh led the



expert team which laid out the program for the reconstruction and development of the Palestinian economy (1994-2000) and was a member of the first Board of Trustees of MAS. The 2015 lecture was delivered by Prof. Jayati Ghosh, Professor of Economics at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Prof. Ghosh has received several Indian as well as international prizes for her contributions to social and economic research. Her current research interests include globalisation, international trade, macroeconomic policy, and the implications of multilateral trade agreements for third world countries. She is also a political activist with remarkable contributions to journalism.

The lecture discussed trade agreements, particularly the WTO, and their negative impact on the economic development projects in developing countries. According to Prof. Ghosh, such agreements involve manifold harsh conditions that restrict investments in addition to trade and industrial policies in developing countries. Inherently, developing countries find it hard to meet the WTO non-trade requirements, such as intellectual property rights, investment protection, government tenders, and trade/customs policies, particularly tariff rates.

Prof. Ghosh focused on the agricultural and food concerns, saying developing countries have to comply with the WTO stringent requirements, citing examples from several developing countries in which the adverse effects of these requirements have turned the economy from a manufacturer/exporter of certain goods into an importer. For example, Haiti used to be a rice exporting country; and when it joined the WTO, it had to reduce the tariff to 3% from a previous 50% protectionism tariff, which forced it into becoming a rice importer.

The changes brought by various WTO rounds are overall more consistent with the goals of advanced economies than of developing economies. With new criteria set forth by the WTO (such as government tendering, non-agricultural market access, rules of origin, investment rules, and competition policy), developing economies are unable to survive competition or find a foothold, so they have been losing ground for implementing trade and industrial policies.



Despite all these limitations, Prof. Ghosh emphasized that being a WTO member is better than remaining outside. Yet, membership requires developing countries to be very cautious when they negotiate membership, and this will be of particular importance to Palestine when the occupation is vanquished.

Upon concluding her lecture, Prof. Ghosh replied to questions from the audience, which largely focused on the potential conflict between WTO membership and being a party to the Paris Protocol. To this question Prof. Ghosh responded that in case Palestine joins the WTO as an independent state, it does not need to remain confined to the Paris Protocol. Rather, Palestine will be able to access international markets and resolve trade disputes.

To download the presentation of the lecture follow this [link](#)