

## **Women in Trade: A South Asian Perspective**

Market access arrangements like the Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+), Everything But Arms (EBA), and Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) have provided an excellent opportunity for South Asian countries such as Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh to enhance their export flows. The renewal and subsequent reapplication of the GSP+ status, along with integration into foreign value chains, are indispensable for stabilizing the external accounts of these countries. While exports have shown an uptick, broader objectives remain a work in progress for all three countries. These include expanding the range of items in the export basket, increasing the share of women in trade, and enabling smaller firms - or firms from vulnerable regions - to integrate into global value chains. Several gender-specific barriers to trade also exist, making it crucial to find ways to enhance outcomes for women exporters from small and medium enterprises (SMEs) by leveraging market access and product diversification opportunities.

In view of the above, this panel discussion will aim to shed light on the topic and address the following questions:

- How can women benefit more from pre-existing trade agreements and what are the best-case scenarios to follow in the South Asian region?
- How have women-focused firms integrated regionally and globally because of market access arrangements on ground?
- What are the various gaps in subsectors across agriculture, industry, or services where women-focused firms could not achieve anticipated gains?
- What are the roles of the public and private sectors in this scenario, and what policy recommendations can be made for public, private, and regulatory spaces to address identified gaps?

### **Panel Organisers**

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