**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS - Chapter 6: International trade and ethical considerations**

Much of the history of trade reveals an ethical ambiguity. Types of trade once thought defensible are now considered unethical, and ethical thinking continues to evolve. There are now far more ethical concerns about health and safety issues which form the basis of nontariff barriers. On the other hand, ethical issues such as child labour struggle to alter the business models of large exporters, even in countries such as the US, which would claim to honour human rights. Both governments and companies are responsible for the effects that trading relations have on home societies and societies of trading partners. Impacts include issues of access to medicines, affordable food imports, precariousness of local producers competing against imports, and the sustainability of local culture against global media companies protected in trade agreements. We have also seen that governments in many countries are active in trade, directly or indirectly. They can behave in ways that benefit societies, but are often inclined to favour some groups and companies rather than others.

Governments set economic goals and trade policies, and are also concerned about societal impacts. While all might, in theory, welcome a regulatory system overseen by the WTO, competing national interests and globalized MNEs make it difficult to achieve agreement. MNEs must act in a trading environment with cross-cutting trade regimes and ethical considerations. While a government might conclude a deal with an MNE which both sides regard as advantageous, such as the award of mining rights, this does not make the deal an ethical one. It could well entail displacement of people’s homes and environmental damage, while government officials are likely to reap financial rewards. International opinion expects ethical behaviour of companies despite their dealings with political leaders who place personal gains above societal goods. For the MNE, identifying ethical guideposts, therefore, is increasingly challenging.