

Codex Alimentarius: Setting Food Safety Standards for Global Trade

The Codex Alimentarius Commission will meet in Rome from 28 June to 3 July to consider a series of issues of potential significance to international trade. The Commission was established in 1962 to recommend minimum food safety standards in order to protect public health and ensure fair trade practices in the food trade.

While agri-business and civil society organisations concerned with food safety have followed Codex issues for many years, the general public ignored even the existence of the Commission until recently. The establishment and growing authority of the WTO have raised public awareness of Codex standards, because the Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures recognises that trade measures based on them will be deemed necessary to protect human health and considered WTO-consistent. Codex Alimentarius norms are thus increasingly relevant in the arbitration of WTO disputes arising over trade measures allegedly adopted to protect human health (see box on page 2).

Science versus Politics

As a consequence of its heightened role in the international trade context, Codex decision-making has become more politicised. While a non-discriminatory and transparent trading system would require the most authoritative scientific advice possible, governments vie to influence recommendations that could affect billions of dollars worth of trade. Furthermore, consumer organisations following Codex deliberations have for years maintained that agricultural and pharmaceutical business interests are disproportionately represented on Codex delegations.

Codex's own decision-making procedures do not help: the Commission and its sub-committees are supposed to adopt standards by consensus but, failing that, only a simple majority vote is required. In the beef hormones case, the EU argued that its ban on beef treated with six growth-promoting hormones was justified in part because Codex standards for the hormones in question were adopted by a narrow margin indicating that the issue was controversial. In view of their quasi-legal status in the WTO Agreements, the Codex Committee on General Principles has been considering ways to make Codex standards more universally accepted.

However, at its latest meeting in April in Paris, the Committee could not agree to change the simple majority rule to a two-thirds majority when consensus could not be found. Australia warned that a two-thirds majority requirement would slow down Codex procedures and make it more difficult to propose new standards or to amend existing ones. The Committee on General Principles was also unable to agree on the role of 'other legitimate factors' than science in determining Codex standards (see Boosting Milk Production below).

The labelling debate is a good example – among many others – of the highly politicised nature of Codex decision-making on food safety standards that have major trade impacts. The Codex Committee on Food Labelling ended its last meeting on 27-30 April in Ottawa deeply divided over the adoption of a Codex recommendation on labelling of processed foods containing genetically-modified organisms (GMOs).

A proposal to make such labelling mandatory was vetoed by the United States, Canada and Argentina. Together with other major agricultural producers, these countries have also repeatedly challenged an existing EU regulation requiring labelling of foods that contain traceable amounts of DNA from genetically modified soya or corn in the WTO's Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade (see Bridges Vol.2 No.6, page 2). While these countries question both the practical feasibility of, and the need for, the EU regulation, consumers' organisations in Europe and elsewhere strongly support labelling, and many WTO Members are currently considering the adoption of at least voluntary labelling schemes. Governments agreed in Ottawa to set up a working group to develop further proposals for the Committee's annual meeting next spring, but observers doubt that the 23-member group will be able to come up with a compromise acceptable to all.

Developing Country Concerns

The inclusion of the requirement that health-related trade measures and standards must be based on sound science in WTO Agreements was intended to protect developing countries against protectionist trade barriers disguised as measures necessary to protect human, animal or plant health. The need to justify such barriers by solid scientific evidence was thought to deter developed countries from restricting developing countries' market access.

In practice, the 'sound science vs precautionary principle' battle is largely being fought between developed economies. Contending that Codex standards create – rather than eliminate – trade barriers to their exports because the norms are not flexible enough to take their particular conditions into account, many developing countries have requested significant technical assistance in complying with existing Codex norms and carrying out risk assessments.

In addition, their presence at Codex meetings – and therefore their input into its standard-setting activities – remain insufficient. Codex members, as well as the SPS Agreement, encourage greater developing country participation in Codex Committees and its advisory scientific panels as a priority in the search for more universal acceptance of Codex standards, but funding for such participation is sorely lacking.

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An additional complication arises from the fact that many WTO Members do not apply Codex standards, and as a result developing countries have to meet a variety of different national requirements applied by their trading partners. In some industrialised countries resistance to Codex standards is co-ordinated by consumers' organisations which fear that the standards do not offer as high a level of protection as national legislation.

Boosting Milk-Production with BST

For several years, various Codex bodies have been struggling with the adoption of maximum residue limit for bovine somatotrophin (BST), a synthetic growth hormone widely used to boost milk production in dairy cows in the US and 14 other countries. The EU placed a moratorium on its use in 1993 and Canada banned its sale last January after scientific studies showed that BST use increased foot problems, mastitis and injection site reactions, as well as caused reproductive disorders in dairy cows (see Bridges Year 3 No.1, page 15). EU veterinary scientists have recommended that the substance not be used, and its Scientific Committee on Veterinary Measures Related to Public Health is expected to adopt an opinion on the effects of BST use on human health shortly.

While restrictions on BST use on animal health grounds are not likely to be challenged, a WTO Member may face dispute settlement procedures if it decides to prohibit imports of dairy products from animals treated with the substance. The Joint WHO/FAO Expert Committee on Food Additives has concluded that residues BST in milk represent no human health risks, but the Codex Committee on Residues Veterinary Drugs in Foods and the Committee on General Principles are divided on whether 'other legitimate factors' than scientific studies – including environmental or consumer concerns – should be taken into account in conducting a risk assessment. If Codex adopts a standard indicating that BST residues represent no human health risk, any import restriction on dairy products could be open to a WTO challenge much the same way as happened in the beef hormones case.

Antibiotics in Animal Feed

Codex scientists could also be called to establish the level of risk to human health from animal-to-human transfers of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Such a standard would have a direct impact on another potential dispute on meat imports into the European Union, which will ban on the use of four antibiotics (tylosin phosphate, spiramycin, virginiamycin and bacitracin zinc) in animal feed as of 1 July. The EU decided to prohibit the antibiotics in response to concerns that they would make bacteria resistant to antibiotics employed to treat human diseases through overexposure in agricultural uses such as animal growth promotion or crop protection. The EU is also considering banning the import of meat from animals fed with the prohibited antibiotics, which are widely used in the United States and Canada.

Meanwhile, the US Food and Drug Administration has begun a revision of its guidelines for approving new antibiotics for animals and for monitoring the effects of old ones, although many industry representatives and veterinarians maintain that there is no scientific evidence of animal-to-human transfers of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. The FDA started the review because no new classes of antibiotics are expected on the market for several years, which makes it important to ensure the potency of existing drugs in human medicine.

The Center for Science in the Public Interest and 36 other civil society groups have called on the FDA to prohibit cattle growth promotants that are also used to treat human diseases, but pharmaceutical and agricultural companies are wary of moves to restrict antibiotic use in animal feed. A representative of Elanco Animal health, a division of Eli Lilly and Co, called the FDA's plan 'a seriously flawed proposal' which greatly overstates the conclusiveness and the implications of available data.

The Codex Alimentarius Commission will consider the conclusions and reports of the various sub-committees at its meeting in June and provide guidance for the specialist committees on dealing with the deadlocked or controversial issues.

Codex Alimentarius Commission

The Commission was established in 1962 under the joint Food and Agriculture Organisation and World Health Organisation food standards programme. Its mandate is to:

- protect consumer health and ensure fair practices in the food trade;
- promote co-ordination of all food standards work undertaken by international governmental and non-governmental organisations;
- determine priorities and guide the preparation of draft standards through and with the aid of appropriate organisations;
- finalise standards elaborated above and, after acceptance by governments, publish them in a Codex Alimentarius either as regional or world-wide standards; and
- amend published standards, after appropriate survey in the light of developments.

Codex and its more than 20 sub-committees consist of government representatives. In order to develop recommendations on a wide range of food safety issues, it uses an eight-step procedure, which takes into account scientific evidence as well as other considerations.

For instance, to determine a safe maximum residue level for a given pesticide or veterinary drug in foodstuffs, a scientific expert panel carries out studies and evaluates the risk. Its proposed draft standard for a maximum limit for residues (MLR) of the drug or pesticide is then submitted to Commission members and interested international organisations for comment on all aspects including possible implications of the proposed draft standard for their economic interests. After discussion in the appropriate Codex committees, member governments in principle adopt final standards by consensus.

Although governments approve Codex standards themselves, they are under no obligation to follow the recommendations. Nevertheless, Codex standards provide guidelines for domestic legislation, and are regarded as the best expression of international scientific consensus on food safety issues. The WTO Agreements on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, as well as on Technical Barriers to Trade recognise them as an acceptable basis for trade restrictions. Problems can arise when countries adopt trade measures that are based on stricter criteria than Codex standards. Such measures, frequently justified by governments under the 'precautionary principle' – or controversial scientific evidence – have been successfully challenged at the WTO, most notably in the beef hormone case (see separate story on page 5).

Seattle Ministerial Update

The 'proposal-driven' second phase of the preparatory process for the Seattle Ministerial is drawing to a close in spite of the high-profile leadership struggle for a new WTO Director-General that currently commands the attention of world press. Once most of the proposals are on the table, WTO Members will start the third phase of the preparatory process, i.e. drafting the Seattle Ministerial Declaration which will provide the framework for the next round of trade liberalisation talks scheduled to start next year. The drafting phase is expected to start in September.

While the scope of the new round remains to be agreed beyond the 'built-in agenda' of agriculture and services, Members have more or less agreed that the negotiations should be concluded within three years. A group of powerful trading nations, including the European Union and Japan, advocate wide-ranging negotiations on a number of topics, including the elaboration of new disciplines for investment and competition policy. This approach is to a large extent shared by a group of fifteen developed and developing countries, called Friends of the New Round, who have announced themselves in favour of a 'broad-based and balanced round of negotiations'.

The US is cautious about backing calls for rule-making in the areas of investment and competition policy but has agreed that, in addition to agriculture and services, the new talks should cover industrial tariff reductions. It is also the leading advocate for securing a commitment that electronic commerce transactions remain duty-free. A group of developing countries, led by India, Pakistan and Egypt, opposes any extension of the built-in agenda and would like the new round to focus on redressing imbalances in the implementation of existing WTO Agreements.

The article below summarises most of the recent submissions by Members. See also related articles on the ministerial meetings of the Friends of the New Round and the OECD on pages 8 and 9.

Agriculture and Services

At a meeting held on 20 May, Korea put forward a relatively minimalist proposal on agricultural liberalisation (WT/GC/W/170), underlining the 'unique nature of agriculture' and the need for gradual reform, as well as the importance of addressing 'non-trade concerns' such as food security or 'multifunctionality'. Opening up the heavily protected agricultural markets of Korea, the European Union, Japan, Norway and Switzerland is one of the main results sought by other WTO Members in the forthcoming talks.

Australia continued its stream of proposals on behalf of the Cairns Group (see Bridges Year 3 No.3, page 1), suggesting that Members agree 'to major reductions in domestic support for all agricultural products, resulting in the elimination of all trade-distorting domestic subsidies with only non-distorting forms of support permitted thereafter' (WT/GC/W/177). It also reiterated the idea of bringing trade in agricultural goods on the same footing as trade in other goods (WT/GC/W/184).

The United States said the objective of the agricultural negotiations should be to 'expand trade opportunities by ensuring further deep reductions in support and protection, while encouraging non-trade-distorting approaches for supporting farmers and the rural sector

and strengthening the rules governing trade in agriculture' (WT/GC/W/186) and overall framework for the agricultural negotiations.

On services, Korea suggested that the negotiations cover all sectors and gradually reduce the scope of exceptions to the most-favoured nation principle. It also said that the next round should address the challenges posed by electronic commerce to the WTO Services Agreement, but warned that, due to the complexity of the subject, 'all relevant issues should be carefully examined before establishing disciplines' in this area. (WT/GC/W/169).

Industrial Tariffs

The EU called on WTO Members to harmonise their tariff structures across all non-agricultural products through the adoption of a 'tariff band approach, defining a low, medium and high band within which all tariffs would have to fall' (WT/GC/W/178). Australia also favoured comprehensive negotiations on industrial tariffs, suggesting that reductions be achieved through comprehensive bindings, cuts in tariff peaks and escalation, elimination of nuisance tariffs, as well as sectoral approaches such as the zero-for-zero schemes promoted by APEC's sectoral liberalisation initiative (WT/GC/W/182). Singapore made a similar proposal, adding that 'building upon work done in other fora such as the APEC Accelerated Tariff Liberalisation Initiative [...] would avoid having to start from scratch in having to determine the negotiating modalities' (WT/GC/W/196). The sectors involved in this initiative are forestry, fisheries, energy, chemicals, medical equipment, jewellery, toys, and environmental goods and services.

Hong Kong highlighted its strong support for including industrial tariffs in the next round of negotiations, with the aim of achieving tariff cuts 'well above' those of the Uruguay Round, to be implemented within three years from the conclusion of the negotiations. No industrial sector should be *a priori* excluded from the round (WT/GC/W/175).

Norway specifically included fish and fish products in its proposal for liberalisation of trade in industrial goods (WT/GC/W/185). The paper suggested a 'global and comprehensive approach, involving significant market access improvements through substantial reductions of tariff rates'. It also noted that a broader product coverage of bound tariffs should be sought, and the problem of tariff escalation should be properly addressed. In addition, the need for special and differential treatment for developing countries, especially LDCs, should be taken into account.

Regional Trade Agreements and State Trading

Concerned about the proliferation of regional trade agreements (RTAs), Korea suggested that Members review WTO provisions on goods and services concerning them – and strengthen the rules in necessary. Hong Kong, China, made a similar proposal (WT/GC/W/174). Australia's proposed the completion of two 'bodies of work addressing systemic and procedural issues associated the regional trade agreements', including the clarification of such concepts as 'substantially all trade' and the

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extent to which WTO rights and obligations for regulation of commerce can be derogated in regional trade agreements. Australia also said clarifications were needed regarding notification requirements and ways to improve the examination of RTAs within the WTO (WT/GC/W/183).

Hungary proposed a revision of GATT Article XVII and related provisions in order to ensure non-discrimination and a balance between rights and obligations regarding state trading enterprises, 'including the elimination of de jure and de facto monopoly import/export rights' (WT/GC/W/172).

Developing Country Issues

Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua suggested that ministers adopt a decision in Seattle 'to reform Article 3.1(a) of the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures in order to correct the existing imbalance' and allow developing countries to use subsidies justified by development objectives, such as economic diversification programmes, industrialisation and sustainable development (WT/GC/W/164).

Malaysia, on behalf of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), recommended that WTO ministers confirm that all Members must ensure that their 'laws, regulations and administrative procedures' are in conformity with WTO obligations 'regardless of the level of promulgation'. This proposal is aimed at bringing various state or local level trade restrictions, such as the Massachusetts 'Burma Law', within WTO disciplines and subject to trade sanctions in case of non-compliance (WT/GC/W/187).

Malaysia also proposed that ministers emphasise the 'Enabling Clause' in order to ensure that preferential treatment for developing countries is 'generalised, non-discriminatory and non-reciprocal in nature' (WT/GC/W/188).

As this issue went to press, the European Union had just submitted seven proposals on its approach to the new round regarding services, trade facilitation, trade and competition policy, government procurement, trade-related intellectual property rights, trade and environment, and duty-free market access for least-developed countries. The proposals make it clear that the EU continues to push for comprehensive, simultaneous negotiations in all these areas, with the exception of market access for least-developed countries. On that issue, the EU proposes that ministers commit already in Seattle next November, 'to ensure duty-free market access no later than the end of the new round of negotiations for essentially all products exported by the least-developed countries. Most advanced developing countries should pledge to contribute as well. They should consider making a contribution to enhance the market access opportunities of the least-developed countries, in particular by building on the considerable autonomous liberalisation undertaken by many developing countries' (WT/GC/W/195).

Trade and environment

Only the European Union and Norway have tabled specific papers on this topic. The EU submission (WT/GC/W/194) proposes that Members agree to consider trade measures taken pursuant to multilateral environmental agreements WTO-consistent, and seeks a clarification between WTO rules and non-product-related process and production methods (PPMs), in particular with regard to eco-labelling schemes based on life cycle analysis. Norway's paper

(WT/GC/W/176) supports the EU position on these issues, but goes further to suggest the negotiation of new disciplines on these issues rather than a clarification of existing rules.

Norway also proposes carrying out environmental reviews of draft trade agreements and provisions, as well as involving other intergovernmental organisations with environmental mandates in trade negotiating meetings. The Seattle Ministerial Declaration 'should contain a reference to the objective of sustainable development, including environmental and developmental principles as reflected in the Rio Declaration, in particular the precautionary principle, the polluter pays principle and the right to development.'

The US and Canada have also highlighted the importance of addressing environmental concerns in the WTO, but neither has come forward with specific proposals. The US is currently defining its negotiating position on several environment- and public health-related issues, including whether the WTO Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures should be reopened, how to interpret TRIPs Article 27.3(b) regarding plant patenting, and how to handle questions related to biotechnology.

The views of industry and environmental/consumer groups are sharply opposed on these topics, in particular with regard to the use of the 'precautionary principle' as justification for health- and environment-related trade measures. US trade and agricultural authorities are currently carrying out a series of public hearings on citizens' priorities for the new round, but have previously indicated that the administration would prefer not to reopen existing Agreements on trade-related intellectual property rights, technical barriers to trade or sanitary measures for fear that the treaties would be weakened in the process.

In addition to the topics above, civil society groups are repeatedly taking US trade authorities to task over their backing of 'early harvest' sectoral liberalisation negotiations on forest products. Conservation groups claim the elimination of tariffs on such goods would significantly accelerate deforestation worldwide. The forestry tariff reduction plan is part of the Accelerated Tariff Liberalisation Initiative that members of Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) are trying to fold into the WTO round.

Meanwhile, the US and Canada have agreed to collaborate in order to ensure that the next round addresses biotechnology. Both countries are seeking easier market access for their genetically engineered crop seeds and products, particularly in the European Union where acceptance procedures for such products are slow and cumbersome. Consultations are underway on whether to aim for a new 'stand alone' set of provisions on approval procedures and labelling for biotechnology or to amend existing rules on agricultural goods, technical barriers to trade and sanitary measures. Biotechnology-related rules could also be developed in the Codex Alimentarius Commission, where the EU is pushing for better acceptance of the precautionary principle and 'other legitimate factors' than science in conducting risk assessments (see cover story).

Canada, the European Union, Norway and the United States have also committed to conducting an assessment of the new round's likely impacts on sustainable development.

The next preparatory meeting will take place on 7-8 June. For the full schedule of remaining preparatory meetings of phase two, please see page 7.

Dispute Settlement Corner

Sanctions Likely in Beef Hormone Case

On 3 June, the United States and Canada will request authorisation from the WTO's Dispute Settlement Body to apply 100 percent tariffs to selected European export products, worth US\$202 million and C\$75 million respectively. The request – made in retaliation for the EU's continuing its 10-year old import embargo on beef treated by growth-promoting hormones – will almost certainly be approved, as the right to apply trade sanctions in cases of non-compliance with WTO rulings is automatic under the Dispute Settlement Understanding (see 'background' below).

While the EU is unlikely to claim that the measures it has taken so far amount to compliance with the WTO's recommendations, it has already announced that it will contest the amount of the retaliation. The EU contends that the trade lost by US and Canadian farmers due to the ban is only about half of the amount sought by the complainants. A WTO arbitration panel will be appointed to establish the proper level of the sanctions. The arbitration – which cannot be appealed – is expected in mid-July, after which the Dispute Settlement Body must authorise the complainants to impose trade sanctions in the amount determined by the arbitrators. Meanwhile, the disputing parties are trying to reach a compromise solution – with little success up to now.

Background

In 1988, the European Union prohibited the use of six hormones commonly employed to promote muscle growth in cattle on the grounds that residues of the hormones in meat could be carcinogenic or otherwise harmful to human health. At the same time an import ban was established on beef treated with the hormones in question. Contending the ban was an unjustifiable trade restriction, the United States and Canada brought the case to the WTO in 1996. The Appellate Body ruled in February 1998 that the ban violated the Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures because the EU had failed to justify it by a scientific risk assessment showing that residues of the six hormones in meat posed a health risk to consumers.

After the ruling, the US and Canada claimed that the embargo must be lifted, while the EU decided to commission more studies on the hormones in hopes that these would provide the risk assessment the Appellate Body had said was lacking. The studies are expected to be completed by the end of this year.

New Study Contested

An interim report released by the EU's Scientific Committee on Veterinary Measures on 3 May made banner headlines throughout the continent: for one of the hormones in question (17 β -oestradiol), there was 'a substantial body of recent scientific evidence that it has to be considered as a complete carcinogen, as it exerts both tumour initiating and tumour producing effects.' While the Committee admitted that available data did not allow a quantitative estimate of the risk, it nevertheless affirmed that 'a risk to the consumer has been identified with different levels of conclusive evidence for the six hormones in question.' In addition, the Committee identified pre-pubertal children as a particularly vulnerable group, and said other population categories could also be adversely affected at various stages of their lives.

American and Canadian trade and agricultural authorities called the study 'yet another misleading report', which repeated the EU's 'unsubstantiated arguments' already 'flatly rejected' by a WTO panel of experts. They pointed out that, as recently as February 1999, a joint WHO/FAO scientific expert panel reconfirmed its earlier opinion that residues of the hormones in question were not harmful to human health if administered to cattle according to good veterinary practice. They blamed the EU for scaremongering in a 'blatant effort' to avoid honouring its WTO obligations, and said they would retaliate against EU exports this summer if no date was set for lifting the ban.

On 26 May, the EU confirmed to the Dispute Settlement Body that it was not in a position to lift its existing import ban by the implementation deadline of 13 May. Instead, the EU said it would study the report's results in more depth in order to evaluate 'on this basis and in the light of any new relevant information what steps may be necessary in the light of our WTO rights and obligations'. The US is also reviewing the new report, and scientists from both trading blocs are scheduled to meet in June to discuss the findings.

European authorities have also said they will continue efforts to negotiate a solution that would avert sanctions, through offering better market access to other US and Canadian agricultural products until all the commissioned scientific reports are completed. Should the studies confirm that the hormones present no danger to human health, the EU might allow hormone beef imports provided they were labelled as such.

Positions Still Far Apart

So far, the US and Canada have insisted that they would only consider compensation on condition that the EU sets a firm date for lifting the ban. The EU has refused to do so citing the preliminary findings described above, as well as the possibility that other studies may confirm that the import prohibition is a legitimate public health measure.

Neither do the disputing parties see eye to eye about labelling potential 'post-ban' hormone-treated beef imports: the complainants contend that labels indicating the meat comes from hormone-treated cattle would mislead customers to believe that the meat is unsafe or of lesser quality. The EU argues that simple country-of-origin labels would not give consumers enough information about the beef they buy.

The beef hormone dispute may well make the still unresolved banana war seem like a mere skirmish (see separate article on page 6). Many EU citizens see it as a fight between food safety and global trade rules, pitching the 'precautionary principle' and concern for public health against questionable science in support of free trade. The US and Canada are equally adamant that the EU-illegal hormones have been repeatedly pronounced safe by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, and stress that the credibility of the multilateral trading system depends on compliance with WTO rulings.

In view of the highly emotional nature of the issue – and the conflicting scientific claims about the hormones' safety – EU governments may ultimately prefer upholding the ban indefinitely in spite of WTO-authorised trade sanctions.

Dispute Settlement Corner**No End in Sight in the Banana War**

On 26 May, the European Commission adopted a report to the EU Council of Ministers outlining alternatives for making the EU's banana regime WTO-consistent. A WTO review panel condemned the EU's revamped banana import and licensing regime in April 1999, and the US was authorised to impose trade sanctions in retaliation for the EU's non-compliance with WTO rulings (see Bridges Year 3 No.3, page 5). Since then, the EU has held talks with the complainants in order to come up with a WTO-consistent banana import regime that would still provide preferential market access to the developing country members of the Lomé Convention (ACP countries). So far, progress in these negotiations has been slow.

The Commission's paper proposes three tariff options: a tariff-only regime with a high flat rate tariff (ACP exports would be allowed to the EU duty-free under the Lomé Convention waiver); retaining separate tariff rate quotas for ACP and 'dollar' bananas, but removing the limit on ACP preferences; or establishing a new quota for all banana imports within which ACP exports would benefit from a zero tariff. The complainants in the case – Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and the US – have expressed a clear preference for a tariff-only system. US negotiators have said they were ready to consider a raise in the EU's bound tariff for bananas (75 ECU/tonne) so as to make the tariff difference a more effective preferential tool for ACP bananas. ACP producers claim that, even with a 75 ECU/tonne tariff, Central and Latin American bananas would displace their more expensive fruit in European markets. Sources close to the negotiations say no specific numbers have yet been discussed.

It would be more difficult to secure agreement on the other two options, as the complainants are unlikely to agree on additional WTO waivers for quotas, although the compliance panel did suggest that the EU could seek such arrangements with other WTO Members. In case either of these options were nevertheless retained, the EU would need to reform its import licensing system for administering the quotas. The review panel made no recommendations regarding the import licensing regime, which has repeatedly been found to discriminate in favour of European distributors of ACP bananas. If EU member states decide to maintain tariff quotas, the Commission proposes distributing import licences either on a 'first come – first served' basis or through auction. The complainants' initial reactions to either solution have been negative.

EU governments are currently studying the various options, and the Commission is not expected to recommend a preferred solution for reforming the banana regime until August. Member states are divided in their approach to the banana crisis, and the any deal will have to be approved by the European Parliament.

Déjà Vu?

An air of déjà vu hangs over the latest developments. The WTO compliance report seemed to suggest that the EU should discard the quota- and licensing systems pronounced discriminatory, and rely only on a preferential import tariff to help ACP banana producers keep their share of the EU banana market. After inconclusive talks with the complainants, the EU's Trade Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan said in early May that if no

agreement were found, the EU would unilaterally devise 'changes to the regime which will come up with a proposal which we think does meet the rules as now interpreted by the WTO.' If the complainants find the compliance option chosen by the EU unsatisfactory, they may bring yet another complaint to the WTO, thus justifying US fears of getting caught in an 'endless loop of litigation' in the matter.

Meanwhile, the US trade sanctions – worth US\$191.4 million a year – remain in force, and Ecuador has requested consultations with the EU 'with a view to a prompt agreement on compensation to Ecuador from 1 January 1999'.

The EU on the other hand made its first request for a dispute settlement panel on 26 May regarding the 'flagrant breach' of WTO rules of the US decision to apply the trade sanctions as of 3 March – according to DSU Article 22.6 – instead of waiting until 19 April when the review panel ruled that the new banana regime was still WTO-inconsistent. Panels are automatically established after a second request is made at a DSB meeting.

Dispute Settlement Briefs

- Shortly after announcing the launch of a comprehensive review on how developing countries have implemented the TRIPs Agreement, the United States on 6 May filed a consultation request at the WTO on Argentina's alleged non-enforcement of exclusive marketing rights for pharmaceuticals in violation of TRIPs Article 70.9, as well as Argentina's failure to protect confidential test data for agricultural chemical products in violation of Article 39.3. Although developing countries have until January 2000 to implement TRIPs, they must provide interim protection for pharmaceuticals and agricultural chemicals.
- A panel was established on 26 May to examine Korea's alleged violations of the GATT, the Agriculture Agreement, and the Agreement on Import Licensing Procedures regarding the sale and import of US beef. According to the US, the beef is sold through restrictive distribution channels and was subject to 'mark-ups' of up to 40% in 1997 and 20% in 1998.
- Australia blocked a US request for a panel on its import ban on fresh or frozen Pacific salmon. Canada won a dispute on the same subject last October, when the Appellate Body found that the embargo was maintained without a proper risk assessment. The case is similar to the beef-hormone dispute, and the US is reportedly concerned that Australia might not lift the ban by 6 July when the 'reasonable period time' for implementation expires. Canada announced in late May that it was seeking public input on a potential retaliation list of Australian exports.
- In another SPS dispute, Japan has confirmed that it will implement the Appellate Body ruling condemning its multiple testing requirements for imported apples and other fruit. However, it will seek to conduct 'scientific and technical examinations' to ensure a 'high degree of protection from foreign pests and diseases'.
- India is appealing the April 1999 panel ruling against its quantitative restrictions on agricultural, textile and industrial products. India had argued that its balance-of-payment difficulties justified the import curbs (see Bridges Year 3 No.3, page 5).

DSU Review Focuses on Implementation Provisions

The Dispute Settlement Body is currently meeting practically every week to continue its review of the Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU) began last year. Delegates have discussed a broad range of issues in the context of the review, and many proposals for changes have been put forward. At this stage, however, it seems unlikely that Members will make substantive changes to the DSU by the July deadline for completing the review. Instead, trade diplomats expect the Seattle Ministerial Meeting to endorse a recommendation that the DSU be amended to clarify its rules on implementation of, and compliance with dispute settlement decisions.

At least Australia, Canada, Ecuador, India and the Philippines have submitted proposals ('non-papers') for clarifying the DSU's compliance and implementation provisions. Of these, Canada's proposal contains the most precise language for future changes. It suggests replacing the current Article 21.5 by a new Article, 21bis, which would specify how compliance with a DSB ruling would be determined and how the process would be sequenced with DSU Article 22. According to the proposal, compliance would be decided by the original panel that ruled on the case, or by the Appellate Body if the dispute was appealed. Members could request a compliance review – without prior consultation with the respondent at any time during the 12 months that follow the implementation deadline. The compliance finding would have to be made within 90 days of the request, and no new implementation deadlines would be given to a country found in non-compliance.

While the Canadian proposal would prevent countries from retaliating until Article 21.5 proceedings have been completed, it would allow 'backdating' any trade sanctions to the date when the losing party was supposed to have complied. The proposal also puts forward a procedure for lifting sanctions, which the DSU as it currently stands does not provide for. The Indian proposal sets forth a procedure for appealing compliance decisions, while the Canadian one suggests that the Appellate Body decide whether there is compliance with a DSB decision – implying that compliance decisions could not be appealed.

Transparency and Access to Justice

Two other substantive issues have emerged as particularly important in the context of the DSU review: transparency and participation, and improved developing country access to the dispute settlement system. The latter issue has been to a great extent defused by the fact that an independent Advisory Centre on WTO Law is likely to be set up by the end of this year. The Centre will assist developing countries in bringing and defending cases in the dispute settlement system. It will be established as soon as 20 developing countries (there are currently 11) and six developed countries (currently five) indicate their decision to be founding members (see also Bridges Year 3 No.1, page 5).

The issue of transparency and amicus briefs on the other hand is so sensitive that no change to the system is likely. Any change to the DSU has to be made by consensus and some Members – including Brazil, India, Malaysia, Pakistan and Thailand – have been vocal in their opposition to allowing NGO input into the dispute settlement process (see, for instance, Bridges Vol.2 No.8, page 8). A recent paper on the DSU review submitted by Pakistan to the General Council called on Members to confirm that DSU provisions prohibit panels from considering unsolicited information, including amicus briefs from private parties (see Bridges Year 3 No.3, page 8 for more details).

NGO Arrangements for the Seattle Ministerial

The WTO's External Relations Division expects to have information pertaining to civil society accreditation to the Seattle Ministerial Meeting on its website by mid-July. As at earlier events involving non-governmental participants, the latter will be required to provide a description of their organisations' activities, as well as the relevance of those activities to WTO concerns. However, organisations that have been accredited to earlier ministerial meetings or symposia need not send in a complete dossier. It should be noted that applications must be made in the name of individuals and that no more than four individuals will be accredited from any organisation.

Interested organisations and associations can request application forms by mid-summer. The applications will be circulated for Members' approval in early autumn, after which registration forms will be sent to successful applicants. Badges will be given to registered participants in Seattle.

Only registered non-governmental participants will be able to use the facilities in Seattle or to participate in the plenary sessions (any negotiation sessions will be limited to government representatives). NGO facilities will not be located in the same building as the Ministerial Meeting, but space is being sought within walking distance. Official proceedings will also be relayed to the NGO centre through close circuit television, and the organisers plan to equip the centre with up to 50 computers with internet connections, printers and other office necessities. They are also trying to ensure that rooms are available to civil society groups wishing to organise meetings of their own.

The WTO External Relations Division is responsible for the accreditation process, as well as allocation of meeting space within the NGO centre. The Seattle Host Organisation can help with accommodation and reserving meeting space at other venues, such as hotels.

Contact: Alain Frank, WTO External Relations Division, tel: (41-22) 739-5152, fax: 739-5777, web: <http://www.wto.org>, or

Seattle Host Organization, tel: (1-206) 770-3150, fax: 770-0106, e-mail: info@wtoseattle.org, web: www.wtoseattle.org

Second Phase of the Preparatory Process for the 3rd WTO Ministerial Meeting (30 November to 3 December 1999)

June 17	WTO General Council Special Session. Suggested focus: proposals on organisation and management of the future negotiations, including the scope, structure and time-frames.
July 6-7	Informal Meeting of the WTO General Council
July 9	WTO General Council Special Session. Suggested focus: proposals regarding all items considered at previous meetings.
July 28-29	WTO General Council Special Session. Suggested focus: proposals regarding all items above and organisation of future work, i.e. phase three of the preparatory process and drafting of the Seattle Ministerial Declaration.

Friends of the New Round

Fifteen developed and developing countries in favour of a 'broad-based and balanced round of negotiations' have formed a coalition called Friends of the New Round.¹ The group aims to ensure that smaller countries have a decisive influence in shaping the Seattle Ministerial Declaration. Trade ministers and other senior officials of these countries met in Budapest on 28 May to discuss 'at the political level, the objectives, expectations and ambitions' of the new round. Although representatives of the Quad (EU, Japan, Canada and the US), as well as India were also invited to the meeting, their views were not strongly reflected in the meeting's informal final document or Chairman's Summary. Neither were they expected to participate in future working meetings of the group, except possibly when these take place at ministerial level.

In the Chairman's Summary, the Budapest meeting participants stressed that 'the Seattle Ministerial Declaration should be clear, concise and explicit, so as to avoid different interpretations'. Such a document would contribute to the prompt start of the new round and avoid the prolonged period of defining the negotiation goals that followed the formal launch of the Uruguay Round.

According to the Summary, there was 'broad agreement that – in addition to the mandated negotiations on agriculture and services – at least industrial tariffs should be covered in the upcoming talks'. India, which together with a number of key developing countries, wants the new round to consist solely of the built-in agenda and redressing existing imbalances in the implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements would have preferred the Summary to say that, instead of 'broad agreement', there was 'broad support' for extending the new round to cover industrial tariffs.

Some ministers argued for the inclusion of investment, competition policy and trade facilitation in the scope of the negotiations but the Summary neither endorses nor rejects the call.

Although the US at least is still in favour of an 'early harvest' approach which would allow some sectoral negotiations to be completed – and their results to be implemented – before the conclusion of all negotiating objectives, the Chairman's Summary states that 'many ministers strongly favoured the single undertaking approach, i.e. that results of the round should be adopted in their entirety and apply to all WTO Members'.

The Friends of the New Round also agreed that in order to improve the WTO's efficiency and public support for it, 'more could be done to explain to society the benefits of trade liberalisation and that of the multilateral trading system, as well as to enhance dialogue with organisations of the civil society, for example in the form of High Level Symposia'. Very little was said on the inclusion of environmental concerns in the new round, beyond confirmation that 'trade and environment policies should be mutually supportive and jointly serve the objective of sustainable development'.

The group's next informal ministerial meeting is tentatively scheduled for next October in Switzerland, when drafting of the Seattle Ministerial Declaration is expected to be in its final stages.

¹ Members of the group include Argentina, Australia, Chile, Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Hong Kong, Hungary, Korea, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Singapore, Switzerland, Thailand and Uruguay.

Lomé Convention Negotiations Stagnate

Negotiations between the European Union and its Lomé Convention partners are proceeding at a snail's pace due to lack of a common political vision of what the future relationship between the 15 EU members and the 71 developing African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries should be. The current Lomé Convention runs until the year 2000, as does the temporary waiver it obtained from the WTO's most-favoured-nation principle.

The Convention covers development aid as well as non-reciprocal trade preferences, such as duty-free entry for many key ACP exports. Commodity protocols have been established under the Convention for sugar, bananas, rum and beef. However, the EU's implementation of the Banana Protocol has been repeatedly condemned by the WTO, which has maintained that the WTO waiver does not allow discriminatory quota and import licensing arrangements (preferential tariffs are covered by the waiver).

The development co-operation component of the new arrangement is far less controversial than its trade dimension. The two sides have already agreed that poverty eradication should be the principle aim of development policies. A set of 'essential elements' whose violation could justify withdrawal of aid or trade preferences has been elaborated although the definition of 'good governance' and its inclusion into the essential elements is still under debate (see Bridges Year 3 No.1, pages 9 and 11).

So far, the EU has been less successful in selling its idea for a post-Lomé IV trade relationship to its ACP partners: the establishment of several free trade areas – or Regional Economic Partnership Arrangements (REPAs) – between the Union and regional groupings of ACP countries. The EU's plan was to seek another WTO waiver for an interim arrangement much like the present Convention until 2005, when the REPAs would start gradually replacing it. Under WTO rules, regional free trade areas must cover 'substantially all trade' and be based on the principle of reciprocity. The proposed REPAs would thus mean the end of the current non-reciprocal market access terms under the Lomé Convention in the medium- or long-term.

ACP countries are reluctant to agree the REPAs, which they see as a threat to their market access into the EU. They thus seek to maintain the status quo of the Lomé Convention for as long as possible, and then possible negotiation of regional arrangements with long transition periods – between 10 and 15 years – to full reciprocity. An alternative would be to replace Lomé preferences with Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) schemes, although these are vulnerable to sudden changes due to their unilateral and non-contractual nature. Some EU governments reportedly favour concluding a framework agreement encompassing present Lomé privileges with an array of alternative trade options after 2005. This would provide ACP countries – which are far from a homogenous bloc, even within regions – with more flexibility than an inevitable free trade agreement within a relatively rigid timeframe.

In the absence of an agreed goal for the negotiations, however, progress is stagnating. The upcoming WTO negotiations may prove a catalyst: unless some mechanism is put in place, the special relationship between Europe and the ACP states could be subsumed in the multilateral goals of the Seattle Round. Some observers predict that the next meeting of EU and ACP trade ministers in Brussels from 25-29 July will make or break the momentum for a new type of trade relationship between developed and developing countries.

No OECD Consensus on Investment, Labour in WTO

Meeting from 26-27 May, trade and finance ministers of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) failed to narrow the gap between the organisation's 29 member states regarding the negotiating agenda for the forthcoming WTO trade talks. The OECD groups the world's most industrialised countries, including those in favour and those opposing sweeping agricultural liberalisation. OECD members also continue to hold different views on how to conduct the next trade liberalisation round.

Without mentioning specific goals, OECD ministers endorsed the built-in negotiations agenda on agriculture and services, stressed the importance of developing countries' full participation in the 'Seattle Round', and agreed that the new round should preferably be concluded within three years. On the scope of the new round, the ministers said they would 'work for an ambitious, broad-based and balanced agenda for the negotiations that responds to the needs and aspirations of all'.

However, they stopped short of recommending any additional areas for negotiation, although they noted that reducing industrial tariffs, facilitating trade or enhancing government procurement opportunities would 'produce substantial benefits for all participants'. The European Union, in particular, was keen to have the final communiqué call for moving the abandoned OECD negotiations on a multilateral investment treaty to the WTO. The United States, which has so far taken a cautious approach to developing investment disciplines within the WTO, led the move to reject the wording proposed by the EU. The issue was dropped from the final communiqué altogether.

The need for the WTO to contribute to sustainable development gets a passing mention in the statement, 'including through appropriate account being taken of environmental issues in the future trade negotiations'. The reference to trade and labour is even vaguer, noting with approval 'continued collaboration' between the WTO, OECD and ILO Secretariats, as well as the potential of respect for labour rights to contribute to better overall living conditions. The US and France were favourable to stronger language with regard to initiating a WTO work programme on the relationship between trade rules and core labour standards, but Korea and Mexico, as well as some other poorer OECD countries rejected such links.

In their communiqué, the ministers recognised that a 'better-functioning and more transparent' WTO Dispute Settlement Understanding was vital and confirmed 'the importance of exploring the most effective means of providing assistance to developing countries to use more effectively the dispute settlement system' (see related article on page 7). On interaction with civil society, the OECD ministers said 'active and constructive communication and consultation with civil society are essential for public understanding of the benefits and challenges of liberalisation.' This language is slightly more proactive than that of the WTO's Geneva Ministerial Statement, which merely recognised 'the importance of enhancing public understanding of the multilateral trading system in order to build support for it.'

In addition to the next round of trade talks, the ministers also discussed corporate governance and adopted a set of non-binding *OECD Principles of Corporate Governance*, which they called 'an important contribution to strengthening the international financial system'. The ministerial communiqué is available at the OECD website <http://www.oecd.org>.

Extracts from the OECD Ministerial Communiqué Paris 27 May 1999

Ministers agreed to aim to achieve timely results, preferably in three years, and to work with WTO members to reach agreement on options and modalities for negotiations, including the principle of a 'single undertaking' and the possibility of achieving results in the course of negotiations. Increasing integration and participation of developing and transition countries in the multilateral trading system remain a priority for OECD governments. The new round must be responsive to the needs of all developing countries, through capacity building, to ensure their economic growth and that they fully reap the gains of liberalisation; in this respect, particular emphasis must be given to the special needs of least developed countries, including improved market access.

Ministers stressed the importance of both effective implementation of existing WTO agreements and, as an integral part of the new round, the negotiations mandated in the 'built-in agenda', which includes agriculture and services. In addition, further liberalisation of non-agricultural tariffs, removal of non-tariff barriers, trade facilitation and expansion of government procurement opportunities would enhance market access on a broader front, and produce substantial benefits for all participants. The WTO must also remain fully responsive to the changing needs of the global economy and society. Ministers consider it essential that the WTO contribute to sustainable development as agreed in Marrakech, including through appropriate account being taken of environmental issues in the future trade negotiations. The current WTO work programmes on Trade & Investment and Trade & Competition as established in Singapore have been constructive. In the preparations for the Seattle Ministerial, their results should provide the WTO General Council with a basis for building consensus on appropriate recommendations to the third WTO Ministerial Conference that may be desirable to enhance the rules-based multilateral trading system.

Ministers renewed their support for the observance of internationally recognised core labour standards. They reaffirmed their rejection of the use of labour standards for protectionist purposes. They welcomed the work of the ILO to promote the new Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Ministers supported continued co-operation between the ILO, WTO and OECD Secretariats and stressed the importance of facilitating a broader understanding on the issues concerned, in and among Member countries. They recognised that promoting respect for labour rights and trade and investment liberalisation, together with good governance, each contribute to better overall living conditions.

Ministers stressed the importance of ensuring enhanced transparency and clarity in the functioning of the WTO system. Active and constructive communication and consultation with civil society are essential for public understanding of the benefits and challenges of liberalisation. Ministers supported the important analytical work of the OECD in support of the multilateral system, and future WTO negotiations in particular. They encouraged OECD to make the results of its work available to a wider audience in order to help inform public debate.

No Consensus on Sustainable Fisheries & Forests

At the end of its seventh session in April 1999, the **UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)** for the first time adopted a decision that recorded disagreement between governments rather than reflected a lowest common denominator consensus position. Unsurprisingly, two areas where consensus could not be found had significant trade repercussions: fisheries subsidies and labelling that would indicate whether the fish/fish product comes from a sustainably managed source.

At the WTO, several countries – including Iceland, New Zealand, the Philippines and the United States – have identified the reduction or elimination of fisheries subsidies as a ‘win-win solution’ that would benefit both free trade and the global environment, and are lobbying for the issue to be included on the WTO’s post-2000 trade negotiations agenda. These countries also supported a recommendation for subsidy reduction at the CSD meeting, but could not convince other governments – notably China, Japan and the European Union – to agree. The latter three heavily subsidise their fisheries sectors, although they are committed under a non-binding FAO action plan adopted last February to gradually eliminate subsidies that contribute to the over-capacity of the global fishing fleet, commonly considered the main reason for the depletion of fish stocks worldwide.

Another disagreement concerned a recommendation on ‘improving information available to consumers of fish’. Such information could include labels indicating that the fish comes from a sustainably managed source. The disagreement mirrors discussions on eco-labelling and certification schemes in the WTO’s Committee on Trade and Environment, which is yet to come to a clear verdict on their WTO-compatibility. When based on production and processing methods (PPMs) rather than product characteristics, such schemes may be considered as technical barriers to trade; and developing countries tend to be wary of their potential as disguised protectionism. Most developed countries approve of them as incentives towards more sustainable consumption patterns.

The third meeting of the **Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF)** held in May was a lacklustre affair where most delegates admitted that the chances for concluding an international convention on the protection of forests were wearing thin indeed. In addition to flagging political will, consideration of the trade and environment aspect of sustainable forest management showed that consensus between forest exporters and importers was no closer than in the Rio process of the early 1990s when only a set of non-binding forest principles was adopted instead of a convention.

At the IFF meeting, delegates could not agree on final text regarding the effects of sustainable forest management on trade liberalisation in forest products or on a recommendation regarding forest certification and labelling schemes. On the former issue, developed country forest exporters wanted the IFF to recommend tariff reductions; developing exporting nations argued that reduction of tariff escalation for their value-added forest products would contribute to sustainable forest management; another group of countries wanted to maintain tariffs to protect their own forest industries, and several developed importer countries thought that the meeting should recommend that all wood come from sustainably managed sources.

For more information about both meetings, see reports published by the International Institute on Sustainable Development, at <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/>

Flexibility Mechanisms to be Discussed in Bonn

As this issue of Bridges went to press, a meeting of the UN Climate Convention’s Subsidiary Bodies was getting under way in Bonn (31 May to 11 June). Until the European Union on 17 May adopted its latest climate change mitigation strategy, the Bonn meeting was expected to focus on technical and procedural issues with little politics involved. However, the EU’s new negotiating mandate for the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol was likely to provide some heated exchanges of views as it had drawn highly critical comments from the United States and Australia even before the meeting began.

At the heart of the controversy is the EU’s determination to limit the use of the so-called ‘flexibility mechanisms’ to 50 percent of a country’s overall greenhouse gas emission reduction target. The other half would have to be achieved solely through domestic measures. The flexibility mechanisms include cross-border greenhouse gas emission trading, joint implementation between industrialised countries and the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). The CDM would allow all participants to collect credit for climate change mitigation actions sponsored by an industrialised nation in a developing country. Such actions could eventually include cleaner technology transfers, reforestation projects and financial support for environmentally-friendly energy and transport solutions, but governments have not agreed on the type of actions that would be eligible for the CDM, or on how the emission credits would be calculated or the benefits shared between the participants. Developing countries currently have no obligations of their own under the Kyoto Protocol.

The Bonn meeting is part of a process aimed at fleshing out the flexibility mechanisms, all of which remain ill-defined in their functioning and scope. Their role in the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol was among the unsolved controversial issues of the last Conference of the Parties in Buenos Aires (see Bridges Vol.2 No.8, page 11). Many industrialised countries regard them as a key element in reaching their reduction targets under the Protocol, as emissions trading and other joint actions with low-emission countries are likely to have far fewer repercussions on domestic economies than measures taken purely within national borders.

At the beginning of the Bonn meeting, New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Canada, the Russian Federation, Norway and the US argued that the EU’s approach would reopen the ‘package’ agreed in Kyoto; reduce the flow of new resources to developing countries via the Clean Development Mechanism; reduce cost effectiveness; contribute to domestic constituencies’ distrust of the Protocol; and create a double standard for the EU and other countries, as the EU intends to achieve its eight percent reduction target through collaboration between its 15 member states. Most developing countries expressed support for the EU’s position.

Together with capping-or-not-capping the use of the flexibility mechanism, the issue of developing country participation in greenhouse gas emission reduction efforts under the Kyoto Protocol is likely to be the most controversial subject at the next Conference of the Parties to the Climate Convention, scheduled from 25 October to 5 November in Bonn. However, the deadline for finalising the work programme for the actual implementation of the Kyoto Protocol will not expire until the sixth Conference of the Parties in the year 2000.

Contact: UN-FCCC Secretariat, tel: (49-228) 815-1000, fax: 815-1999, e-mail: secretariat@unfccc.de, Internet: <http://www.unfccc.de>

NGOs Tracking the Seattle Ministerial Process

Several NGO networks regularly follow the Seattle Ministerial process, often with the intent to help their members lobby their governments while negotiating priorities are being defined. Some such organisations and their campaigns were described in Bridges Year 3, No.3, page 10. The contacts below may be helpful to civil society groups wishing to get involved in the preparatory process at a regional or an issue-based level. (Cross-postings between the various information dissemination services are common.)

- In Europe, the International Coalition of Voluntary Agencies (ICDA) circulates documents and position papers emanating from civil society organisations, governments and the European Commission, as well as information about trade, environment and development-related meetings. To be added on the electronic mailing list, please contact ICDA, tel: (32-2) 230-0430, fax: 230-5237, e-mail: icda@skynet.be, web: <http://www.icda.be>

- In North America, the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy has just launched an electronic publication called The Road to Seattle, which contains trade and agriculture-related information from miscellaneous, mostly US-based sources. To receive the bulletin, please send an e-mail to listserv@iatp.org. In the body of the message type: subscribe road_to_seattle. The Road to Seattle is also available at the IATP website <http://www.iatp.org/trade>

IATP has also opened a WTO Ministerial Planning Forum for groups and individuals working on preparations for the Seattle Ministerial. The forum contains a variety of threaded discussions on topics including agriculture, trade and environment, TRIPs, antitrust and competition policy, logistics and trade and investment. To join, please send your name, e-mail address and a brief description of your institution to wtoforum@iatp.org.

- In Latin America, the Global Forum on Sustainable Food and Nutritional Security sends out regular electronic mailings on issues of interest to activists in trade and biotechnology, human/workers' rights, agriculture, etc. Contact: Global Forum on Sustainable Food and Nutritional Security, c/o Agora, tel: (55-61) 347-4914, fax: 274-8822, e-mail agora@tba.com.br, web: <http://www.globalforum.org.br>

- More focused on regional issues and trade blocs, the Centro Latino Americano de Ecología Social (CLAES) circulates trade and environment-related information through electronic listservs. The materials include news alerts, press snippets, meeting announcements and reports, as well as a news bulletin entitled El Observatorio Ambiental Agropecuario del MERCOSUR focusing on the environmental aspects of agricultural and forestry policies in the MERCOSUR region. Contact: claes@adinet.com.uy, web: <http://www.sicoar.com.uy/claes>

- Genetic Resources Action International (GRAIN) maintains a listserver called BIO-IPR in order to 'circulate information about recent developments in the field of intellectual property rights related to biodiversity & associated knowledge' destined for 'individuals active in the struggle against IPRs on life'. The mailings contain articles from various sources, meeting reports and resource alerts. To get on the mailing list, send an e-mail message to bio-ipr-request@cuenet.com, with the word 'subscribe' (no quotes) as the subject. For general information about GRAIN, please visit <http://www.grain.org> or send an e-mail to grain@bcn.servicom.es

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All WTO meetings take place in Geneva. Dates are subject to change, please contact the WTO for confirmation.
Internet: <http://www.wto.org> (All WTO phone and fax numbers start with (41-22) 739. Only extensions are provided in this list.)

June 10-11	WTO Working Group on the Interaction Between Trade and Competition Policy Contact: Robert Anderson, tel: 5198, fax: 5790	July 7-8	WTO Council for TRIPs Contact: Matthijs Geuze, tel: 5418, fax: 5790
June 14-15 London	Implementing the Kyoto Protocol Contact: Philippa Challen, Royal Institute for International Affairs, tel: (44-171) 957-5700	July 9	WTO General Council Special Session (for the 3 rd Ministerial Meeting) Contact: Peter Pedersen, tel: 5848, fax: 5460
June 14-18 Vienna	Second Session of the Criteria Expert Group on Persistent Organic Polluters Contact: Jim Willis, UNEP Chemicals, tel: (41-22) 979-9111, e-mail: jwillis@unep.ch	July 12-14	WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade Contact: Vivien Liu, tel: 5455, fax: 5620
June 15	WTO General Council Contact: Paulo Barthel-Rosa, tel: 5095, fax: 5761	July 16	WTO Sub-Comm. on Least-developed Countries Contact: Ingela Nilsson, tel: 5230, fax: 5774
June 16	WTO Dispute Settlement Body Contact: Paulo Barthel-Rosa, tel: 5095, fax: 5761	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">PUBLICATIONS AND RESOURCES</p> <p>Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. 1999. <u>Global Trade Reform: Maintaining Momentum</u>. Commonwealth of Australia. Canberra (also available at URL http://www.dfat.gov.au)</p> <p><u>Courrier de la Planète</u> – Développement, environnement, les défis d'un monde solidaire. Numéro 46, juillet-août 1998. Edition speciale sur 'Essor des biotech et principe de précaution'.</p> <p>Genetic Resources Action International. 1999. <u>TRIPs versus Biodiversity: What to do with 1999 review of Article 27.3(b)</u>. GRAIN. Barcelona (also available at URL http://www.grain.org/publications/reports/tripsmay99.htm).</p> <p>Krueger, Jonathan. 1999. <u>International Trade and the Basel Convention</u>. Royal Institute of International Affairs, Trade and Environment Series. Earthscan. London</p> <p>Mayer, Jörg; Chambers, Brian and Farooq Aisha. 1999. <u>Development Policies in Natural Resource Economies</u>. Edward Elgar. Cheltenham, UK/Northampton, MA, US</p> <p>OECD. 1999. <u>Agricultural Policies in OECD Countries: Monitoring and Evaluation 1999</u>. OECD. Paris</p> <p>UNCTAD. 1999. <u>Scope and Definition</u>. UNCTAD Series on issues in international investment agreements. United Nations. New York and Geneva</p> <p>World Commission on Forests and Sustainable Development. 1999. <u>Our Forests...Our Future</u>. Report of the WCFS. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, UK</p> <p>WTO. 1999. <u>EU Proposals for the Seattle Ministerial</u>. WTO/GC/W/189-195. WTO. Geneva</p> <p>WTO. 1999. <u>Turkey – Restrictions on Imports of Textile and Clothing Products</u>. Report of the Panel. WT/DS34/R. WTO. Geneva</p> <p>http://www.wto.org/wto/ecom/ecom.htm – New section of the WTO's internet site. Contains news and official records of WTO activities concerning electronic commerce.</p> </div>	
June 16-18	WTO Textiles Monitoring Body Contact: J.-P. Lapalme, tel: 5223, fax: 5765		
June 17	WTO General Council Special Session (for the 3 rd Ministerial Meeting) Contact: Peter Pedersen, tel: 5848, fax: 5460		
June 24-25	WTO Committee on Agriculture Contact: Paul Shanahan, tel: 5095, fax: 5760		
June 17-18 Miami	Second Meeting of the FTAA Committee of Government Representatives on Civil Society Contact: FTAA Secretariat, tel: (1-305) 381-9043, fax: 381-8390, e-mail: webmaster@ALCA-FTAA.ORG		
June 22-24	WTO Council for Trade in Services Contact: A.-Hamid Mamdouh, tel: 5435, fax: 5771		
June 23-25	WTO Textiles Monitoring Body Contact: J.-P. Lapalme, tel: 5223, fax: 5765		
June 28-29	Working Group on Transparency in Government Procurement Contact: Vesile Kulaçoğlu, tel: 5187, fax: 5790		
June 28 - July 3 Rome	Codex Alimentarius Commission (23 rd Session) Contact: Codex Alimentarius Commission, Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, FAO, fax: (39-06) 5705-4593, e-mail: Codex@fao.org		
June 29-30	WTO Committee on Trade and Environment Contact: Doaa Abdel Motaal, tel: 5873, fax: 5620		
July 7	WTO Committee on Trade and Development Contact: Chiedu Osakwe, tel: 5250, fax: 5774		
July 7-8	WTO Committee on Phytosanitary and Sanitary Measures Contact: Gretchen Stanton, tel: 5086, fax: 5760		