



INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR  
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## G-8 URGES ENVIRONMENT CONSIDERATIONS IN MILLENNIUM ROUND

Meeting in Cologne, Germany this past weekend, leaders from the Group of Eight leading industrialised countries (G-8) called for environmental considerations to be "fully taken into account" in the next round of WTO trade talks. In the G-8 communiqué, ministers also said they were committed to "a science-based, rules-based approach" to biotechnology trade, yet did not endorse a proposal offered by French President Jacques Chirac to establish a global High Scientific Council for Food Safety which would "study and validate" new products and processes on a voluntary basis.

Britain, Germany and Italy supported the French idea but the U.S. and Canada expressed opposition to the global food safety body, arguing that food safety is adequately addressed under WTO rules. The G-8 did agree to study the issue further under the auspices of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Working Group on Harmonisation of Regulatory Oversight in Biotechnology.

The OECD Working Group, coincidentally, met 6-9 June at which time it announced that mutually acceptable data on GMOs has not produced identical environmental or health and safety risk assessments. To address this the Working Group said its new work plan will include a study on the risk assessment criteria and methodology used across the 29 OECD countries. As at the G-8 meet, OECD countries disagree over harmonised regulatory oversight of GMOs although they did agree to form a Task Force on Novel Foods and Feed, which will meet for the first time in September 1999. The Working Group also announced a workshop for later this year in Norway to discuss environmental issues associated with the release into the environment of genetically modified trees.

Also at the G-8 meeting, ministers agreed to a US\$70 billion debt relief plan for the world's heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC's). The package will reduce the target for countries' debt-to-export ratios from 200 per cent or more to 150 per cent, and reduce the ratio of debt to government revenue from 280 per cent to 250 per cent for countries that export at least 30 per cent of their national income and raise 15 per cent in tax revenue.

Organisations leading global campaigns for debt relief acknowledged the action was a breakthrough for the G-8 grouping, but noted that the US\$70 billion package would still not be enough to meet the UN target of halving the number of people living in absolute poverty by 2015. "There are only six or seven HIPC's that would meet the criterion [the G-8 laid out], so essentially they've found a clever way of excluding them," Kevin Watkins of Oxfam said.

Coinciding with the G-8 meeting, protests against globalisation and unbridled capitalism were expected to take place last week in different cities around the world. In India, the National Alliance of Peoples Movements comprised of peasants and farmers were expected to protest WTO policies and effects on India's poor. The Continental Caravan-99 (ICC-99), a group of 500 farmers from India and other countries arrived in Cologne on 17 June to hold protests against the G-8 Summit. A protest in London organised by a number of environmental and anti-poverty groups turned violent as protestors vandalised businesses and clashed with police in London's financial district.

"G8 lukewarm on plan for food body," FINANCIAL TIMES, 21 June 1999; "OECD to continue harmonisation work despite differing policies among members," INTERNATIONAL TRADE REPORTER, 16 June 1999; "G-7 leaders reach debt-relief accord at Cologne summit," INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE, 19 June 1999; "International crisis to shut out trade at G-8 summit in Cologne," INSIDE US TRADE, 18 June 1999; "Campaigners seek better deal," ECONOMIC TIMES, 13 June 1999; "Inter-Continental Caravan Reaches Cologne for G8 Summit," PGA PRESS RELEASE, 16 June, 1999.

## **GENERAL COUNCIL CONTINUES MINISTERIAL PREPARATIONS**

While proposals for inclusion in the Seattle Ministerial Declaration are flowing in at an increasing speed, the General Council has met twice in Special Session this month to continue preparations for the WTO Third Ministerial Conference, to be held at the end of this year in Seattle. On 7-8 June, Members met in an informal meeting of the Special Session of the General Council. These informal meetings are intended to allow interaction among Members on issues up for discussion in the context of Ministerial preparations. A wide range of issues were raised during this meeting and only a selection of these will be covered here. Readers will find a more detailed report on Ministerial preparations in *BRIDGES Between Trade and Sustainable Development*, Year 3, No. 5, June 1999 (forthcoming).

There was a long discussion of a paper submitted by Zambia on behalf of several developing countries. This paper sets out a number of proposals on almost all the main issues of concern to developing countries, such as implementation, market access and preferential access in textiles and agriculture, issues relating to technical barriers to trade and to sanitary and phytosanitary measures. The EC repeated that developed countries should commit themselves at Seattle to duty-free access for least-developed country products no later than at the end of a new round. The EC also called for the more advanced of the developing countries to make a contribution to this effort. For the first time at the 7-8 June meeting, a number of delegations came out as supporting this proposal.

On issues falling within paragraph 9(a)(ii) of the Geneva Ministerial Declaration (in other words, the negotiations mandated at Marrakech, also known as the "Built-in Agenda"), there was broad discussion and support for a very liberal proposal on agriculture put forward by the Cairns group. In this context, Japan, Korea, Norway, Switzerland reiterated the need to address multifunctionality in agriculture. In this context, India pointed out that the current trade liberalisation ideology doesn't sufficiently take into account non-trade concerns such as food security and said that developing countries should be given flexibility when giving domestic support for agricultural producers.

On services, also an issue on which negotiations were mandated at Marrakech, a large number of delegations emphasised the need for negotiations to be broad-based and cover all sectors and all modes of supply. India in this respect noted that the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS Agreement) does provide some flexibility for individual developing countries to open fewer sectors and liberalising fewer types of transactions. The issue of the movement of natural persons was also discussed in this context.

On investment, the European Communities indicated it would submit its proposal very soon. A number of countries including those of the Central European Free Trade Association (CEFTA), Japan and Costa Rica supported new negotiations on investment. India, Pakistan and Uganda on the other hand remarked that the Working Group on Investment still had a large number of issues to address, saying that it is therefore premature to say investment should be included in new negotiations.

Several WTO Members including Chile, the EC, CEFTA, Japan and Switzerland were in favour of negotiating rules on competition. India, Pakistan and Morocco said more time was needed to study the issue, while the U.S. said they couldn't support a deal on competition.

On trade and the environment, the EC said it was conducting a sustainability impact assessment of the new round and wanted to see the environment feature prominently at the Seattle Ministerial. Delegations such as Norway, the EC and Switzerland mentioned issues such as ecolabelling, PPMs and MEAs as issues needing clarification and/or inclusion in a new round of trade talks. A number of developing countries said that the WTO Committee on Trade and the Environment is the place where this work should be done, and that there was no need to duplicate this work.

The formal meeting of the General Council Special Session, meeting on 17 June, was to focus on paragraph 10 of the Geneva Ministerial Declaration, i.e. on modalities of how a new round of trade negotiations should be conducted. This point is far from being settled at this point in time. The only point that really stood out from the 17 June meeting is the EC's repeated proposal for a short round, with the specific time-frame of three years repeatedly mentioned. Other countries have objected that it is difficult to discuss the length of the round before the issues to be included are known.

ICTSD Internal Files.

## **GENERAL COUNCIL DECIDES LDC MFN WAIVER; NGO ACCREDITATION FOR SEATTLE**

Meeting on 15 June, the WTO General Council adopted a decision that will allow developing countries to grant preferential market access for exports from least-developed countries (LDCs) - an option already available to developed countries under earlier decisions. The decision waives the

most-favoured-nation obligation 'to the extent necessary to allow developing country Members to provide preferential tariff treatment to products of least-developed countries, designated as such by the United Nations, without being required to extend the same tariffs to the products of any other Member.' The preferential treatment must, however 'be provided on a generalised, non-reciprocal and non-discriminatory basis' and must 'not raise barriers or create undue difficulties for the trade of any other Member'. There is a tacit consensus among WTO Members that the 48 least-developed countries, which command only about 0.3 percent of global trade, must be better integrated in the multilateral trading system. Many industrialised countries already offer duty-free access to most LDC products, and the European Union is pushing for an across-the-board industrialised country commitment to zero tariffs for LDC products in Seattle.

The General Council also agreed on 15 June to use the same registration procedures for non-governmental groups wishing to attend the Seattle Ministerial Conference as those used for the previous WTO Ministerials. NGOs must supply in detail all the necessary information showing how they are concerned with matters related to those of the WTO. Groups that have been registered for and attended previous Ministerial Conferences or the March 1999 environment and development symposia, only need to join to their application a shorter presentation of their activities and how they relate to those of the WTO. The reference of the meeting for which they have been granted registration and attended has to be mentioned.

Requests for registration accompanied by the presentation of the NGO activities have to be sent by mail before 16 August 1999 to: External Relations Division, Centre William Rappard, 154 rue de Lausanne, 1211 Geneva 21, Switzerland. For more information, see <http://www.wto.org/wto/ngo/ngojune.htm>

ICTSD Internal Files.

## **CLINTON URGES DEEPER ILO-WTO CO-OPERATION**

Addressing the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) annual Conference in Geneva, U.S. President Bill Clinton last week called for greater co-operation between the ILO and the WTO "to ensure that all our people are lifted by the global economy."

"...Open trade is not contrary to the interest of working people," Mr. Clinton said. "Competition and integration lead to stronger growth, more and better jobs, more widely shared gains. Renewed protectionism in any of our nations would lead to a spiral of retaliation that would diminish the standard of living for working people everywhere," he said.

Further, Mr. Clinton said, "as we press for more open trade, we must do more to ensure that all our people are lifted by the global economy. As we prepare to launch a new global round of trade talks in Seattle in November, it is vital that the WTO and the ILO work together to advance that common goal." Mr. Clinton said that workers "must know the dignity and respect of basic rights in the workplace," if that goal is to be reached.

Mr. Clinton stopped short of calling for formal linkage between trade and labour standards at the WTO - a linkage strongly opposed by developing countries.

President Clinton's speech follows his proposal earlier this year for a US\$25 million fund to help create a new arm of the ILO, to work with developing countries to put in place basic labour standards. Earlier this month, Mr. Clinton issued an executive order prohibiting US government agencies from buying goods manufactured wholly or in part by forced or indentured child labour.

"Remarks by the President to the International Labour Organisation Conference," 16 June 1999; "President Clinton addresses International Labour Conference," ILO PRESS RELEASE, 16 June 1999; "Non aux enfants exploités: Clinton promet un soutien total à l'OIT," TRIBUNE DE GENEVE, 17 June 1999; "Clinton plaide pour les droits sociaux," LE FIGARO, 17 June 1999; "The Americas: Clinton urges WTO to stress labour rights," FINANCIAL TIMES, 17 June 1999.

### **MERCOSUR TAKES STEPS TOWARD DEEPER UNION**

On 28-29 June, EU and Mercosur are to hold a summit in Rio de Janeiro where the two sides are expected to launch bilateral free trade talks. With little time left, however, EU trade officials are still without a negotiating mandate for the talks. EU governments remain split over the timing of negotiations. France, Ireland and the U.K. are opposed to launching EU-Mercosur bilateral talks before the next round of WTO trade negotiations are concluded. The so-called Millennium Round of WTO trade talks is expected to be launched later this year and conclude by 2003. European Commission officials said a likely compromise could be reached in time for the Rio summit, allowing EU negotiators to undertake talks in the meantime on non-tariff barriers to trade such as food safety. However, it is unclear how such a mandate would play with Mercosur trade officials adamant that EU-Mercosur talks be all inclusive.

Indeed, Mercosur officials met for an economic summit last week where it was emphasised once again that the EU must be prepared to make concessions in the agricultural sector as pre-condition for bilateral trade talks. (See also *BRIDGES Weekly Trade News Digest*, Vol. 3, No 22, 7 June, 1999). "Agriculture makes up an essential part of Mercosur's economies and international trade. . . Therefore, the negotiations must include reciprocal liberalisation of all trade...and must begin shortly to be concluded before 2005," according to the Mercosur communiqué.

Also at the Mercosur summit, officials agreed to take steps toward a co-ordinated economic policy for its four core members Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. Mercosur established a commission to develop economic targets and a timetable toward economic convergence, targeting fiscal deficits and interest rates. The economic union would be modelled after the EU's Maastricht Treaty, which set the stage for the common European currency. While economic convergence has long been a goal of Mercosur, the decision to emphasis economic convergence comes as observers cast doubt on Mercosur's viability as an economic power as the grouping struggles under the weight of Brazil's currency devaluation and political turmoil in Paraguay.

Mercosur last week also signed trade agreements with Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago; and investment accords with Australia and New Zealand.

"EU seeks compromise in launching Mercosur trade talks," DOW JONES, 7 June 1999; "Mercosur summit wraps up with promise to push farm issues with EU," AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 15 June 1999; "Les pays du Mercosur misent sur l'union économique," LA TRIBUNE, 16 June 1999; "South America's Mercosur seeks to harmonise economy," REUTERS, 14 June 1999; "Mercosur

summit ends with pledge to co-ordinate policies," DOW JONES, 15 June 1999; "Mercosur inks trade agreement with Australia, New Zealand," AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 15 June 1999.

## **WTO DISPUTE SETTLEMENT UPDATE**

The WTO Dispute Settlement Body last week established a panel to investigate an EU complaint against US trade sanctions imposed in March against EU products as part of the EU-U.S. banana dispute. (See *BRIDGES Weekly Trade News Digest*, Vol. 3, No 9, 8 March, 1999). The EU argues that the U.S. unilaterally imposed US\$500 million in retaliatory sanctions before WTO authorisation had been granted.

Canada last month said it would seek WTO permission to impose retaliatory tariffs on Australian products if Australia does not comply by 6 July with a 1998 WTO ruling against Australia's ban on the importation of untreated fresh, chilled or frozen salmon (see *BRIDGES Weekly Trade News Digest* Vol. 2, No. 42, 2 November 1998). The U.S. last week made its own request for a panel against Australia concerning its ban on salmon - the U.S. wants to make sure Australia complies with the 6 July deadline in its dispute with Canada.

The U.S. blocked an EU request to establish a dispute settlement panel over a U.S. safeguard measure imposed to protect U.S. wheat gluten producers from "serious injury" from EU shipments of wheat gluten. The safeguard reduces EU access to the U.S. market for wheat gluten for three years. The EU argues that the U.S. investigation leading to the imposition of safeguards was incomplete and in violation of international trade rules. The U.S. also blocked the first request by Japan for a panel on the U.S. anti-dumping act of 1916, which Tokyo alleges violates the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the WTO Antidumping Agreement. The U.S. denied the 1916 Act violated trade rules noting that the trade effects of the Act are below the level considered to be in violation of WTO rules.

Also last week, Australia said it would not appeal a WTO panel ruling issued last month which found that direct subsidies provided by Australia to the country's sole automotive-leather producer violate international trade rules.

"Canada threatens trade sanctions against Australia," DOW JONES, 31 May 1999; "U.S. blocks EU WTO panel on wheat gluten safeguard measure," INSIDE US TRADE, 18 June 1999; "Dumping: Japan goes to WTO over US act;" "WTO: No wheat gluten inquiry for EU," FINANCIAL TIMES, 17 June 1999.

## **COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSES MINISTERIAL PREPARATIONS**

The WTO Committee on Trade and Development (CTD) met on 16 June. The main point it discussed was the contribution the Committee could make to the Seattle Ministerial Meeting.

While several countries - including Egypt, Morocco, Mexico and Australia - said that the forum for discussing anything to do with Ministerial preparations - was clearly the General Council, it was generally felt that the CTD had a role to play in assisting governments to prepare for a new round of negotiations.

Australia also felt that the Committee could look at special challenges which low-income countries face in the multilateral trading system, particularly in the area of market access. Australia also suggested enlarging scope for technical assistance and capacity building.

Mexico suggested that the CTD should come up with some issues to be considered that would be forwarded to the General Council before 30 September, to be taken into account in preparations for the Ministerial Meeting.

At the most recent meeting of the CTD, Members again mentioned the paper that the Secretariat is preparing, on Special and Differential Treatment (see also *BRIDGES Weekly Trade News Digest*, Vol. 3, No 22, 7 June, 1999). Since so few replies to the questionnaire sent out last year were sent in, several countries have suggested that the Secretariat compile those received.

ICTSD Internal Files.

## **IN BRIEF**

In the largest case yet brought under the North American Free Trade Agreement's (NAFTA) Chapter 11, (which deals with investors' rights and expropriations), Vancouver-based Methanex Corp. last week filed a notice of intent to claim an estimated US\$970 million from the U.S. for financial losses suffered as a result of a California State ban on the use of the gasoline additive methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE). Methanex argues that the California ban unfairly targets MTBE in what is a broader environmental issue concerning gasoline and water resources. "Damages sought over California ban on gas additive," *GLOBE & MAIL*, 16 June 1999; "Canadian firm seeks \$970 million from U.S. under investor provisions," *INSIDE US TRADE*, 18 June 1999.

Canadian officials are expected in the coming months to float the idea of an EU-Canada bilateral free trade agreement, a potential precursor to a broader agreement between the EU and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Canada hopes such an accord would reverse recent years' decreases in EU trade with and investment in Canada. "Canada wants giant EU-NAFTA free trade area," *REUTERS*, 16 June 1999.

The EU last week said it would postpone until at least 15 December a ban on all U.S. beef imports after the U.S. assured it had tightened controls on beef exports to ensure beef products contained no banned hormones. This decision affects conventional beef products produced without growth hormones: the ban is still in place for hormone-treated beef. (See *BRIDGES Weekly Trade News Digest* Vol. 3, No. 18, 10 May 1999.) "Embargo: EU postpones ban on U.S. beef," *FINANCIAL TIMES*, 15 June 1999.

Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia hope to revitalise efforts in the near term toward economic and political integration under the Arab Maghreb Union (UMA). Established in 1989, the UMA has been bogged down by political differences between its members. "Maghreb poised to revive regional union," *IPS*, 16 June 1999.

Analysts last week said the national budgets presented this month by Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda indicated that the three countries would not realise a regional economic community from July 1, 1999 as hoped. The East African Community (EAC), as the grouping is called, is expected instead to postpone until July 2000 a zero-tariff regime, although maintaining a 10 percent tariff on imports

from Kenya, the grouping's largest economy. "East Africa common market still a dream after budgets," REUTERS, 11 June 1999.

## **WTO IN BRIEF**

WTO Members on 18 June again failed to reach consensus on a new Director-General (D-G), with deep divisions remaining over who should be the trade bodies' next leader. Last week was to be a do-or-die deadline for selecting a new D-G: instead, Members will now take until at least early next month to decide between New Zealand's Mike Moore and Thailand's Supachai Panitchpakdi. *BRIDGES* Weekly Trade News Digest will report next week on some of the main issues that have arisen in the context of the difficulties in agreeing on a new Director-General. "Members pause leadership talks," FINANCIAL TIMES, 19 June 1999.

## **EVENTS & RESOURCES**

### **▪ EVENTS**

For a more complete list of events, please refer to ICTSD's web calendar at <http://www.ictsd.org/html/calendar.htm>

### **WTO Meetings**

An updated list of forthcoming WTO meetings is posted at <http://www.wto.org/wto/about/meets.htm>. Please bear in mind that dates and times of WTO meetings are often changed, and that the WTO does not always announce the important informal meetings of different WTO bodies.

21 June: DISPUTE SETTLEMENT BODY, informal meeting on DSU review. For information contact Nuch Nazeer, WTO, (41-22) 739-5393.

22 June: COUNCIL ON TRADE IN SERVICES. For information contact Nuch Nazeer, as above.

24 June: COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE. For information contact Peter Ungphakorn, WTO, (41-22) 739-5412.

24 June: DISPUTE SETTLEMENT BODY, informal meeting on DSU review. For information contact Nuch Nazeer, as above.

24 June: COUNCIL ON TRADE IN SERVICES, meeting on electronic commerce. For information contact Jean-Guy Carrier, WTO, (41-22) 739-5429.

### **Other Events**

27-28 June, Banff, Canada: MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE COMMISSION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION (CEC). The environment ministers for Canada, Mexico and the U.S., are all expected to attend. There will, inter alia, be a public session and a round table on CEC program initiatives. For detailed information on the agenda see: <http://cec.org/new/> For



information contact Corrie Castello, CEC Secretariat (until 25 June): 393 rue Saint-Jacques Ouest, Bureau 200, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H2Y 1N9, tel: (1-514) 350-4338; (from 26 June): The Rimrock Hotel Banff, Alberta, tel: (1-403) 760-5529, email: ccastell@ccemtl.org, web: <http://www.cec.org>

1 July, Geneva: UNCTAD - TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD. Twenty-first executive session. For information contact Alisa Clarke, email: [alisa.clarke@unctad.org](mailto:alisa.clarke@unctad.org), tel: (41-22) 917-1234, or visit <http://www.unctad.org/en/special/tb21ag.htm>

1-2 July, University of Leeds, UK: ECO-MANAGEMENT AND AUDITING CONFERENCE. Includes a Symposium on Culture, Organisations and the Environment: Change and the Implementation of Environmental Management Systems. The conference provides a forum for the dissemination of research findings, practical guidance and case studies associated with the implementation and experiences of environmental management systems and associated corporate environmental management tools. Cost: £250.00. For information contact Elaine White, ERP Environment, P.O. Box 75, Shipley, West Yorkshire, BD17 6EZ UK, tel: (44-127) 453-0408, fax: 453-0409, email: [lainewhite@erpenvironment.org](mailto:lainewhite@erpenvironment.org), web: <http://www.erpenvironment.org/cfrence/ema.htm>

7 July, Geneva: UNCTAD - EXPERT MEETING ON THE IMPACT OF CHANGING SUPPLY-AND-DEMAND MARKET STRUCTURES ON COMMODITY PRICES AND EXPORTS OF MAJOR INTEREST TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. For information contact Alisa Clarke, email: [alisa.clarke@unctad.org](mailto:alisa.clarke@unctad.org), tel: (41-22) 917-1234.

9 July, Geneva (to be confirmed): WTO NGO BRIEFING on preparations for the WTO's Third Ministerial Meeting, to be held at the end of this year in Seattle. For information, contact Peter Pedersen, WTO, tel: (41- 22) 739 5848, email: [peter.pederson@wto.org](mailto:peter.pederson@wto.org)

12-16 July, Rome, Italy: SIXTH SESSION OF THE PRIOR INFORMED CONSENT (PIC) ROTTERDAM CONVENTION. For information contact Linda Durkee, UNEP Chemicals, Geneva, Switzerland, tel: (41-22) 917-8511.

25-27 July, São Paulo, Brazil: REGIONAL LATIN-AMERICAN CONFERENCE OF THE ILA: "MERCOSUR, HUMAN RIGHTS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT". Hosted by the Brazilian branch of the International Law Association. For information contact Cerne Consultoria de Eventos, Av. Brig. Fario Lima, 1685, cj. 1B, 1 andar 01452-001, São Paulo, SP Brazil, tel: (55-11) 212- 7904, fax: 814-1518, email: [cerne@uol.com.br](mailto:cerne@uol.com.br)

2-4 August, Harare, Zimbabwe: 11TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE AFRICAN SOCIETY OF INTERNATIONAL AND COMPARATIVE LAW: "AFRICA AND THE CHALLENGE OF GLOBALISATION ON THE EVE OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM". Hosted by ASICL. For information contact Society Secretariat, 402 Holloway Road, London N7 6PZ England, (44-171) 609-3800, fax: 609-5400, email: [asicl@compuserve.com](mailto:asicl@compuserve.com)

29-30 October, Berlin, Germany: THE TRANSATLANTIC BUSINESS DIALOGUE CONFERENCE. An annual meeting between leaders of international business and senior European and American trade decision-makers to develop joint EU-US trade policy recommendations. For information contact Lisa Schroeter, Xerox US TABD Office, 1401 H Street NW, Washington, DC 20006, tel: (1-202) 414-1298, fax: (1-202) 414-1217, web: <http://www.tabd.com/>

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