



INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR  
TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT

BRIDGES

# Weekly Trade News Digest

8 February 2000

ISSN 1563-003X

Volume 4, N°5

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

• WTO 'Back In Business' With Ag And Services .....	1
• EU, ACP Agree To New Trade and Aid Accord .....	2
• DSB Rules On Generic Drugs .....	3
• Biosafety Protocol Welcomed, Cautiously .....	5
• OECD In Strong Position In WTO Chair Selections ...	6
• UNCTAD X Gears Up .....	7
• Davos: Shades of Seattle .....	8
• Corrigendum .....	9
• In Brief .....	10
• WTO In Brief .....	10
• Events & Resources .....	10

## WTO 'BACK IN BUSINESS' WITH AG AND SERVICES

WTO Members met on 7 and 8 February for a meeting of the General Council (GC). During the 2-day session, WTO Members discussed follow-up to the Seattle WTO Ministerial meeting, the future of negotiations in agriculture and services, and the election of a new GC chairperson, among other issues. The event marked the first formal GC of 2000, and took up issues that had been deferred from the last such meeting on 17 December 1999 (see *BRIDGES* Weekly Trade News Digest Vol. 4 No. 1, 10 January 2000, <http://www.ictsd.org/html/weekly/story1.10-01-00.htm> ).

In advance of the 7 February General Council meeting, Members met informally on 2 and 4 February where they considered proposals to move forward with negotiations on agriculture and services. Under the WTO's built-in agenda, Members are mandated to negotiate liberalisation in services and agriculture beginning in 2000.

At the 7-8 February meeting, it was decided that talks on services would start in the week of 21 February with a Special Session of the Council for Trade in Services, while talks on agriculture would begin with a Special Session of the Committee on Agriculture on 23-24 March. Members agreed that negotiating committees for both agriculture and services would report directly to the General Council so as to streamline the negotiating process.

According to one WTO Secretariat representative, it is unlikely that actual negotiations on services and agriculture will begin this year. Rather, the Special Sessions would start by defining the scope and mandate for forthcoming negotiations in those two areas. WTO Director-General (D-G) Mike Moore expressed his optimism with the proceedings: "The atmosphere is very good," he said. "We have set up a structure with negotiations...The WTO is back in business."

During the GC sessions, Members also discussed the issue of transparency, with a number of Members adamant that discussions about institutional reforms in this area should be limited to internal transparency (e.g. participation and information sharing issues) and not transparency with regard to outside organisations. However, some Members, notably Japan and the EC, have submitted proposals to address external transparency and institutional reform. Japan's suggestion calls for the creation of 'an eminent person's group' that could include NGOs, which is echoed by the EC. The EC has supported, *inter alia*, consultations with and a formal accreditation system for NGOs, immediate derestriction of WTO documents, and an annual open meeting of the WTO.

At the 7 February GC, D-G Moore presented findings from his dialogue with Members over the issue of transparency and how to improve the WTO negotiation process at the 7 February GC meeting. Topics covered by the D-G included: a package of measures for least-developed countries (LDCs), including zero-tariff market access for 'substantially all' LDC goods; expanding technical cooperation; proposals to extend transition periods for developing countries to implement various provisions of WTO agreements; other implementation issues; and improving WTO decision-making.

Agreement on how to proceed on all these areas remains undecided, and while they remain formally 'de-linked' from the mainstream negotiations in agriculture and services, one WTO source stated that some would very likely be used as trade-offs in a wider negotiating context.

In related news, WTO Director-General Mike Moore on 3 February called on developed countries to open their markets to products from the developing world. "I think it is a moral duty for the developed countries to do more to help the poorer ones," Mr. Moore said at a press briefing on 3 February. "The developing countries, and especially the poorest among them, are getting fed up with being told to stand on their own feet, when so many markets are closed to them," Mr. Moore said.

"WTO gearing up to formally launch ag, services negotiations," INSIDE US TRADE, 4 February 2000; "Helping poor states is rich powers' moral duty: WTO chief," KYODO NEWS INTERNATIONAL, 4 February 2000; "WTO "back in business as talks launched," REUTERS, 7 February 2000; ICTSD Internal Files.

## **EU, ACP AGREE TO NEW TRADE AND AID ACCORD**

Officials from the EU and 71 African, Pacific and Caribbean (ACP) countries met from 2-3 February to finalise a trade and aid accord to replace the Lomé IV convention that expires on 29 February. Ministers agreed to a 20-year convention, under which the current Lomé trade terms will be extended at least through 2002, when a so-called preparatory period would begin during which ACP countries will build their capacities to withstand freer trade. Commencing 2008-2020, the EU and ACP will begin two-way free trade arrangements conforming to WTO rules.

The 20-year term represents a compromise for both sides. The ACP had wanted a 30-year term for full phase-in of regional agreements between the EU and ACP countries or groupings of countries, the EU had argued for a 15-year term. ACP countries argued for the inclusion of ACP countries that are not among the so-called least developed countries (LDCs) to be included in an EU initiative at the WTO to extend duty-free access for substantially all goods from LDCs by 2005. ACP countries said that the LDC initiative could hurt non-LDC exports within the ACP grouping.

"What the ACPs are arguing is that in [the preparatory 2002-2008] period, because of the general dismantlement of tariffs, the value of ACPs preferences will be further eroded and therefore their competitive position on the EU market will be even worse than it is today," chief EU negotiator Philip Lowe said.

The EU argued that extending such preferences would discriminate against other developing country WTO Members who are neither a part of the LDCs or ACP groupings, and would run counter to the objective of renegotiating Lomé in the first place - that is, to make the convention compliant with WTO trade rules.

The EU and ACP must still secure an extension to the current WTO waiver for the EU-ACP preferential market access arrangement that will now continue through 2008 (see *BRIDGES Weekly Trade News Digest* Vol. 4, No. 3, 25 January 2000, <http://www.ictsd.org/html/weekly/story5.25-01-00.htm> )

EU and ACP officials are expected to sign the new accord in May. The accord will be signed in Fiji; hence it will formally cease to be called the Lomé Convention.

In related news, ACP officials said last week that the grouping "fully supports" Cuba's efforts to join the ACP grouping in time for the signing of the new accord. The EU issued no official response. Membership in the ACP would allow Cuba to enjoy the same non-reciprocal trade preferences with the EU as the other ACP countries and enable it to share in the pending \$US13.4 billion aid package.

"Trade and illegal immigrants are sticking points," IPS, 2 February 2000; "EU, ACP agree radical overhaul of relations," REUTERS, 3 February 2000; "Cuba haste to join Lome group," FINANCIAL TIMES, 4 February 2000; L'Europe et les pays ACP réforment leur relation privilégiée," LE MONDE, 4 February 2000.

## **DSB RULES ON GENERIC DRUGS**

A WTO Dispute Settlement Panel has issued a preliminary ruling in an EU-Canada dispute over Canada's generic drug regime. The Panel found that Canada is not in violation of global intellectual property rules by allowing domestic generic pharmaceutical makers to carry out preparations for producing a drug before its patent expires. The EU brought the case to the WTO, complaining that the Canadian generic drug regime violates the WTO Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs). Specifically, the EU argued that Canada's regime violated TRIPs by favouring pharmaceuticals over other technologies (Article 27.1); by allowing the manufacture of patented product without the patent holders approval (Article 28); and by failing to protect patented products for 20 years after filing (Article 33).

Canada allows generic drug manufacturers to stockpile generic drugs six months before a drug's patent expires, and to begin preparations to make the generic version at any time. This allows Canadian generic drug producers to deliver generic drugs to market more quickly than if work on a generic version of a drug had to wait until patent expiry. The WTO Panel ruling found that the process of preparing for manufacture of generic versions of drugs (e.g. filing for licences, etc) prior to patent expiry does not violate TRIPs. However, the Panel found that manufacturers must wait until patent expiry before commercial production can commence. Generic drug manufacturers note that the ruling would result in only modest production delays for generic drugs, but goes a long way to protect consumer interests by cutting time-to-market for generic drugs by as much as two to three years.

In other dispute panel news, a WTO Panel ruled that Mexico violated WTO antidumping rules by imposing duties against imports of US high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) after considering the HFCS imports' impact on only a part of Mexico domestic sweetener industry. The US brought the case to the WTO in May 1998. The Panel did not recommend that Mexico withdraw the duties, but did call on Mexico to revise its methodology with respect to how the duties are imposed.

WTO Members on 27 January adopted a WTO Dispute Settlement Panel ruling that the US' Section 301 law does not violate international trade rules (for background on the dispute see *BRIDGES Weekly Trade News Digest* Vol. 4, No. 1, 10 January 2000, <http://www.ictsd.org/html/weekly/story2.01-10-99.htm> ). The EU had brought a complaint against the US law in March 1999 in the context of the ongoing dispute between the EU and US over the EU banana import regime. Section 301 is a mechanism used by the US Trade Representative to identify what it deems to be unfair trade practices faced by US exporters and demand reform - backed by the threat of sanctions.

The Panel based its finding in favour of the US on commitments made by the US in its Statement of Administrative Action (SAA) issued as part of the US bill implementing the Uruguay Round trade agreements. Under the SAA, the US Trade Representative is required to base any Section 301 sanctions on WTO panel and Appellate Body reports (see *BRIDGES Weekly Trade News Digest* Vol. 4, No. 1, 10 January 2000, <http://www.ictsd.org/html/weekly/story2.10-01-00.htm> ).

The EU chose not to appeal the WTO ruling, noting that the ruling rendered the US a "an empty shell, as this panel report does not only impose on the US the clear obligation to follow [WTO dispute] rules and procedures when using Section 301, but it also impedes the use of Section 301 as a threatening tool," according to EU Ambassador to the WTO Roderick Abbott. However, a number of countries expressed disappointment that the EU did not appeal the ruling, arguing that the SAA provisions did not go far enough to ensure US compliance with WTO rules. Other Members welcomed the ruling, noting that it has the effect of putting the US on probation.

Also at the 27 January DSB meeting, the US announced it would appeal a ruling by a WTO dispute panel ruling which found that US countervailing duties imposed on imports of British steel violate global trading rules (see *BRIDGES Weekly Trade News Digest* Vol. 4, No. 1, 10 January 2000, <http://www.ictsd.org/html/weekly/story2.10-01-00.htm> ).

"WTO panel allows generic drug makers to start before patents end," *INSIDE US TRADE*, 4 February 2000; "Generic drug manufacturers pin hopes on ruling on tests for patented medicines," *INTERNATIONAL TRADE REPORTER*, 26 January 2000; "WTO Panel concludes Mexico "inconsistent" in HFCS case," *DOW JONES*, 31 January 2000; "US trade law 301 approved by

WTO," FINANCIAL TIMES, 28 January 2000; "EU says WTO ruling draws teeth of US trade law," REUTERS, 27 January 2000; "WTO adopts Section 301 ruling; curb on US retaliation welcomed," INTERNATIONAL TRADE REPORTER, 3 February 2000.

## **BIOSAFETY PROTOCOL WELCOMED, CAUTIOUSLY**

Governments, industry, and non-governmental organisations last week issued reactions to the newly agreed Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. Environment ministers and trade negotiators from 138 governments concluded five years of talks on the protocol on 29 January. The new agreement is designed to ensure the safe transfer, handling, use, and disposal of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). The Protocol is the first binding international agreement addressing situations where GMOs cross national borders (see *BRIDGES* Weekly Trade News Digest Vol. 4, No. 4, 1 February 2000, <http://www.ictsd.org/html/weekly/story1.01-02-00.htm> )

While all parties acknowledged the tremendous significance of reaching the compromise accord, some observers noted that the concessions made could have the effect of compromising the objectives of the Protocol.

A number of critical observers noted strong-handed tactics by the Miami Group of agricultural exporters (Argentina, Australia, Canada, Chile, Uruguay, and the US) on the issue of labelling of GMO shipments. The Protocol calls for all shipments of GMOs to carry a label noting whether or not they "may contain" GMOs, while the Like-Minded Group of developing countries had pushed for stricter labelling and traceability requirements, including segregation of GMO products. The compromise greatly disappointed a number of developing countries, but was reportedly presented by the Miami Group as a deal-breaker should the developing world vote against it.

In a statement on behalf of civil society groups, Chee Yoke Ling from the Third World Network warned that the labelling compromise would not be the last word on the subject. "Nevertheless, civil society -- consumers, farmers and scientists -- will continue to be vigilant. The demand for segregation and labelling will not stop", she said.

A number of environmental groups weighed in on the labelling compromise, saying that the result was a blow to consumers' right to make informed decisions about their food. "Against the odds, we have a precautionary protocol, but real consumer choice on GMO foods and crops has been sacrificed along the way", said a spokeswoman for Friends of the Earth.

Agreement on the Protocol also required a compromise on its relationship with the WTO agreements. The Protocol preamble states "this Protocol shall not be interpreted as implying a change in the rights and obligations of a Party under any existing international agreements", but also states a few sentences later that, "the above recital is not intended to subordinate this Protocol to other international agreements."

One EU official noted that the effect of the two sentences was to cancel each other out. Observers note this lack of definition could be an entrée to more GMO-related trade disputes. Kristen Dawkins of the US-based Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy noted on this point that "Monsanto and other producers are no doubt already plotting how to use the WTO to undermine the Protocol."

Among the key components of the Protocol is the operational use of the precautionary principle with respect to the import of GMOs. The EU and developing countries had pushed hard for the precautionary principle within the Protocol, arguing that its inclusion was crucial to protect environment, human, animal or plant health.

In a related development, the European Commission on 2 February adopted a Communication on how the EU intends to apply the precautionary principle. "Where action is deemed necessary, measures should be proportionate to the chosen level of protection, non-discriminatory in their application and consistent with similar measures already taken", the EC paper stated. "They should also be based on an examination of the potential benefits and costs of action or lack of action and subject to review in the light of new scientific data and should thus be maintained as long as the scientific data remain incomplete, imprecise or inconclusive and as long as the risk is considered too high to be imposed on society.

Finally, they may assign responsibility or the burden of proof - for producing the scientific evidence necessary for a comprehensive risk assessment. These guidelines guard against unwarranted recourse to the precautionary principle as a disguised form of protectionism," the paper states. The paper is available at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/off/com/health\\_consumer/precaution.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/off/com/health_consumer/precaution.htm)

While environmental groups praised the inclusion of the precautionary principle within the Protocol, they were less welcoming toward the EU guidelines on the principle's application. Environmental groups were disappointed at overly strict requirements for risk assessments, and over the lack of consultation with environmental groups on putting the guidelines together. They also sharply criticised the EU requirement for a cost-benefit analysis as part of the assessment process, arguing that this component creates a bias towards inaction.

"Environment: biosafety talks end on mixed note," THIRD WORLD NETWORK, 31 January 2000; "GMO protocol offers compromise on crops, WTO relationship," INSIDE US TRADE, 4 February 2000; "Critics fear new treaty still subordinate to trade interests," IPS, 2 February 2000; "Countries agree on Biosafety Protocol regulating transboundary movement of GMOs," INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT REPORTER, 3 February 2000; "Opinion divided on EU precaution paper," ENDS, 3 February 2000; "EU: 'Precautionary principle' is not protectionist," FINANCIAL TIMES, 3 February 2000; "Commission adopts communication on the precautionary principle," EC PRESS RELEASE (IP/00/96), 2 February 2000.

## **OECD IN STRONG POSITION IN WTO CHAIR SELECTIONS**

The WTO General Council on 8 February selected the Chairpersons of most of the WTO's bodies where the bulk of the day-to-day work of the organisation takes place. Chair positions are normally held for a period of one year. Notably, consultations are still ongoing over who will Chair the Committee on Agriculture -- where mandated negotiations on agriculture will take place starting this year -- and the Council on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs).

If conventional rotation practices are followed, both Chairs will go to OECD ambassadors; the Chair for the Council on Trade in Services (where mandated negotiations on services will take place) has already been allocated to Canada.

According to the WTO, the TRIPs Chair will be selected "pending further consultations and taking into account the overall balance of the remaining Chairmanships to be appointed by the CTG for its Subsidiary Bodies." The TRIPs agreement, though not in the formal built-in agenda to be further negotiated this year, contains provisions for partial review to start now on several critical provisions which amount to a significant share of negotiations. The Chairs of all the subsidiary bodies of the CTG -- including the Committee on Agriculture -- will likely be selected at an as-yet-unannounced informal meeting of the CTG. Such a meeting is expected to be held before the next convening of the Committee on Agriculture, scheduled for 23-24 March, and likely before the next TRIPs Council meeting on 21-22 March.

The following persons have been appointed as chairs: General Council: Amb. Kåre Bryn, Norway; Dispute Settlement Body: Mr. Stuart Harbinson, Hong Kong, China; Council for Trade in Goods: Amb. Carlos Pérez del Castillo, Uruguay; Council for Trade in Services: Amb. Sergio Marchi, Canada; Committee on Trade and Environment: Amb. Yolande Biké, Gabon; Committee on Trade and Development: Amb. Ransford Smith, Jamaica; Trade Policy Review Body: Amb. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Bangladesh; Committee on Regional Trading Agreements: Amb. Edsel T. Custodio, Philippines; and Working Group on the Relationship between Trade and Investment: Amb. Man Soon Chang, Korea.

"WTO Chairpersons for 2000," WTO PRESS RELEASE, 8 February 2000; ICTSD Internal Files.

## **UNCTAD X GEARS UP**

Ministers from 188 countries will meet from 12-19 February for the quadrennial policy summit of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The meeting, known as UNCTAD X, will be held in Bangkok, Thailand and will focus on the theme "Developmental strategies in an increasingly interdependent world: applying the lessons of the past to make globalisation an effective instrument for the development of all countries and all people."

WTO Director-General (D-G) Mike Moore will attend the meeting, along with WTO D-G-in-waiting Supachai Panitchpakdi, currently Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister. Their presence could help facilitate meetings between WTO Members in an effort to iron out lingering differences from the Seattle WTO Ministerial.

UNCTAD Secretary General Rubens Ricupero has called for UNCTAD X to help break the deadlock in WTO trade talks resulting from the Seattle WTO Ministerial. "We can help the trading system embodied in the WTO to look at questions related to the development perspective," Mr. Ricupero said last week. "We can provide a forum for many of the same actors (present in Seattle) to discuss the issues, away from pressure and with no need to try to negotiate texts." As *BRIDGES Weekly Trade News Digest* went to press, however, senior officials from the US and other western countries were absent from the UNCTAD X attendance roster. According to one developing country envoy, "It does not say much for the sincerity of the big powers if they turn their back on dialogue with us."

Protestors are expected to be on hand to protest globalisation and multilateral institutions. "We just want to tell those leaders to pay more attention to the problems of underprivileged people around the world, and we expect the meeting to give us a good response," said Kamol Kamoltrakul, co-ordinator of the Forum of Asia. As *BRIDGES* went to press it was unclear whether there would be a

ban on public rallies near the UNCTAD meet. As part of the official parallel UNCTAD agenda, an NGO Caucus is scheduled from 7-8 February. The event is designed to provide civil society delegates representing national, regional and international groups the opportunity to offer their collective views on the issues related to the UNCTAD X agenda.

Mr. Ricupero has called for UNCTAD X to serve as a "world parliament on globalisation," which could serve as an organised dialogue between countries and civil society on issues related to globalisation, including trade, investment, consumer protection and food security.

UNCTAD X chair Thailand is expected to propose the establishment of a research institute on comparative development, aimed at devising country-by-country measures to enable individual developing countries to shape economic policies better tailored to their specific economic situation and needs.

"UNCTAD officials play down leaders' absence," THE NATION (Thailand), 4 February 2000; "La CNUCED post-Seattle se voit en parlement de la mondialisation," TRIBUNE DE GENEVE, 3 February 2000; "UNCTAD head urges wide North-South trade debate," REUTERS, 2 February 2000; "UNCTAD prioritises civil society and trade," IPS, 25 January 2000; "UNCTAD chief sees role as trade think tank," REUTERS, 24 January 2000; "NGOs urged not to over-react," BANGKOK POST, 1 February 2000; "UNCTAD to set up research body on development," KYODO NEWS INTERNATIONAL, 1 February 2000.

## **DAVOS: SHADES OF SEATTLE**

North-South divisions were evident at the World Economic Forum (WEF) held in Davos, Switzerland from 28 January - 2 February. While a very different gathering than the Third WTO Ministerial meeting held in Seattle late last year, the annual Davos gathering of leaders from governments, business, and academia amplified the differences between the developed and developing world.

US President Clinton addressed the forum, where he renewed his call (first made at the Seattle Ministerial) for a WTO working group to look at the linkages between trade, environment, and labour rights. As in Seattle, the proposal incurred the ire, perhaps more indirectly, of representatives from the developing world who called the proposal protectionism in disguise.

Invited to the Davos forum to share their perspectives were a number of NGO representatives, including: Vandana Shiva, the noted Indian scientist; Thilo Bode, head of Greenpeace International; Martin Khor, director of Third World Network; and Victoria Tauli Corpuz, director of the Tebtebba Foundation.

On 31 January, six NGO representatives -- including Shiva, Khor and Tauli-Corpuz -- issued an open letter to WEF President Professor Klaus Schwab. The letter expressed appreciation for the inclusion of NGOs in the WEF proceedings, but noted that the presence of NGOs at the Davos meetings was still very small. "We urge you to deepen and expand civil society presence within the forum to reflect the concerns that preoccupy citizens across the world, especially those groups and sectors experiencing exclusion from all political and economic processes because of globalisation," the letter stated. The joint letter proposed a number of topics that forthcoming Davos meetings should address, including "Globalisation and the creation of new poverty," "Cancellation of Third



World external debt," "Reforms to the WTO rules and system to orientate it to the needs of developing countries," and "Defending livelihoods and protecting the environment."

Philip Jennings, general secretary of Union Network International in Switzerland, was also among the NGO representatives participating at the meeting. Mr. Jennings said that globalisation is not working for the working person.

Mr. Jennings' comment brought a strong reaction from South Africa's FINANCIAL MAIL, in which one correspondent wrote, "Perhaps in Europe, where an unemployment rate of more than 10 percent constitutes a national crisis, trade unions can't visualise the problems of the workless classes in a country like S. Africa where unemployment of nearly 40 percent is the norm. The anti-trade lobby may or may not know it, but its policies are providing social welfare for the rich."

Between 1,000 and 2,000 protestors had a significant presence at Davos, building on momentum first generated by similar protests at Seattle. Most of the protests followed the anti-globalisation message from Seattle and also focused opposition on the "closed-door" atmosphere of the Davos forum. Their message was muted, however, after protests turned violent when protestors defied a ban on demonstrating near the Davos meeting place. Two policemen were injured, and protestors inflicted property damage on a McDonald's restaurant.

US financier George Soros called the protests a "publicity stunt" and criticised the NGOs that supported the Davos (and Seattle) protests. "The NGOs are generally very good at protesting, but they're not very good at finding a constructive solution", he told reporters.

"Global Conspiracy or Capitalist Circus?;" "An All-American Show?" FOCUS ON TRADE, February 2000; "Arrogance and bad advocacy rule in Davos and beyond," FINANCIAL MAIL (S. Africa), 4 February 2000; "Real trade issues avoided at forum, NGOs say," REUTERS, 1 February 2000; "Les cahots de la mondialisation," LE FIGARO, 31 January 2000; "Calls for free trade mix with pessimism about new trade round," BLOOMBERG, 30 January 2000; "In repeat of Seattle, economic forum draws protests," WALL STREET JOURNAL, 31 January 2000; "Security tight in Davos after protests," AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 30 January 2000; "Letter on Davos from NGOs present," MARTIN KHOR, 8 February 2000.

## **CORRIGENDUM**

Last week's issue of *BRIDGES* Weekly Trade News Digest indicated in "US in Murky Waters Over Shrimp-Turtle" that: "the US outlined a non-binding Regional Agreement on the Conservation and Management of Marine Turtles and their Habitats in the Indian Ocean and South-East Asian Region that it had negotiated with 22 countries -- including the four Shrimp-Turtle complainants -- during a 19 to 22 October 1999 meeting in Australia." Please note that the October 1999 symposium concluded only with a resolution (rather than a non-binding agreement) wherein the participants agreed to hold further consultations aimed at concluding a regional agreement on turtle conservation. The resolution indicates that negotiations on this agreement are to be initiated within the first half of 2000.

**IN BRIEF**

A dispute over the interpretation of some key commercial aspects of a Morocco - EU trade and political partnership agreement may require a renegotiation of trade protocols within the accord. The accord, due to go into effect 1 March 2000, allows Morocco tax-free access to the European market for agricultural goods and allows EU industrial exports tax-free access into Morocco.

Spanish farmers and lorry drivers carrying Moroccan goods have recently been involved in a series of confrontations over the EU's reversal of a decision requiring European produce traders importing Moroccan tomatoes to have import licenses. The EU imposed the license requirements in December 1999 when Morocco exceeded its marketing period quota on tomatoes.

The major issue in the dispute is whether Morocco may export produce beyond the tax-free quota if it pays the same duty on the excess required by a country without a preferential trade agreement. Moroccan producers seek an interpretation of the accord that will allow them to maintain preferential access to EU markets while gaining normal (non-preferential) access for exports beyond the stated quota. The EU maintains that exports shall not exceed the quota regardless. Spanish farmers, meanwhile, are demanding that the licensing system be retained. Both countries are currently considering asking the WTO to arbitrate the dispute. "Morocco, EU at odds over tomatoes," FINANCIAL TIMES, 4 February 2000.

**WTO IN BRIEF**

The Gulf state of Qatar has formally announced an offer to host the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the WTO. The meeting is expected to take place sometime in 2001. Qatar would use its capital city of Doha for the event. "Qatar offers to host next WTO Ministerial Meeting in Doha in 2001," REGULATION, LAW & ECONOMICS, 2 February 2000.

The European Commission (EC) on 23 February will hold a public meeting to present the findings of its Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) Report on the European Commission's agenda for a new round of WTO trade negotiations. The assessment was carried out by researchers at the University of Manchester (UK) and can be viewed at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/2000\\_round/sia.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/2000_round/sia.htm). The meeting will take place at EC offices in Brussels. For more information on attending the 23 February public meeting, contact Emma Sutherland; tel: (32-2) 295-0518; email: [emma.sutherland@cec.eu.int](mailto:emma.sutherland@cec.eu.int) before 16 February. "Public Meeting: Sustainability Impact Assessment and the New Round," EC PRESS RELEASE (4D4MKR), 3 February 2000.

**EVENTS & RESOURCES**

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

- **Events**

10 February, Paris: COMMERCE & ENVIRONNEMENT: QUELS ENJEUX APRÈS SEATTLE? Organised by SOLAGRAL, the meeting will address the "lessons from Seattle" and the "medium-

and-long-term working perspectives". To confirm your attendance, please contact Yannick Jadot, tel: (33-1) 43-94-73-33; fax: 94-73-36; email: [solagral@solagral.asso.fr](mailto:solagral@solagral.asso.fr)

18-20 February, Washington, DC: ASIL INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC LAW GROUP ANNUAL MEETING. This meeting is entitled: "Interfaces: From International Trade to International Economic Law." For contact information: Jeffery Atik, Suffolk University Law School, 120 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02108 USA; tel: (1-617) 573-8777; email: [jatik@acad.suffolk.edu](mailto:jatik@acad.suffolk.edu)

19-21 February, New Delhi, India: TERI SILVER JUBILEE CONFERENCE SERIES. The title of this conference is Global Sustainable Development in the 21st century: Directions for innovation and change. This is one of a series of conferences that will cover crucial issues of local, regional and global relevance in the 21st century. For information contact: The Silver Jubilee Conference Secretariat TERI, Darbari Seth Block, Habitat Place, Lodhi Road, New Delhi - 110 003, India; tel: (91-11) 462-2246, or 460-1550, 465-3001; fax: 462-1770 or 463-2609; email: [program@teri.res.in](mailto:program@teri.res.in); web: <http://www.teriin.org/25years/index.htm>

23 February, Brussels: PUBLIC MEETING: SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT ASSESMENT & THE NEW ROUND. This meeting is a follow-up of The Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) Report on the European Commission's agenda for a new round of WTO trade negotiations. The assessment was completed in November and can be found at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/2000\\_round/sia.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/2000_round/sia.htm) . At the meeting the European Commission's contractors, from the University of Manchester, will present their findings. For information contact: Emma Sutherland, tel: (32-2) 295-0518; email: [Emma.Sutherland@cec.eu.int](mailto:Emma.Sutherland@cec.eu.int)

18-20 October, Aalborg, Denmark: EURO ENVIRONMENT 2000. This conference provides a forum where business meets with representatives from government, academia and stakeholders to share and discuss visions, strategies and actions towards sustainable development. Abstracts from business, government, NGOs and academia are highly encouraged. The deadline for submission of abstracts is 15 February. The abstract should be in English with a maximum of 400 words and reflect one of the themes of the conference. Please send abstracts to: [else\\_herfort@akkc.dk](mailto:else_herfort@akkc.dk). Authors will be notified of acceptance or rejection of the abstract no later than 15 March, 2000. For information contact: The Euro Environment; tel: (45) 99-35-55-55; fax: 99-35-55-80; email: [euro@akkc.dk](mailto:euro@akkc.dk); web: <http://www.akkc.dk/environment>

- **Resources**

THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION: A GUIDE TO THE FRAMEWORK FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE. 1999. By Bhagirath Lal Das. This is a detailed and intelligible guide to the intricacies of the WTO agreements for those that are not yet acquainted to the subject and for those that are only looking for some clarity on certain concepts, ideas and even general provisions. The intention is to foster a more thorough understanding of the WTO agreements, help countries know their rights and obligations, and to educate industry and trade bodies the parameters within which they can now operate. To order contact: THIRD WORLD NETWORK, 228 Macalister Road, 10400 Penang, MALAYSIA.

THIRD WORLD RESURGENCE, Issue number 112-113, Dec 99/Jan 00: This issue is titled "The Seattle Debacle: What Happened & What Next?", and contains a number of analytical articles on

the WTO's Third Ministerial Conference in Seattle. For subscriptions contact: Subscriptions & Marketing, THIRD WORLD NETWORK, 228 Macalister Road, 10400 Penang, MALAYSIA; tel: (60-4) 226-6728 or 226-6159; fax: 226-4505; email: [twm@igc.apc.org](mailto:twm@igc.apc.org)/[twmpen@twm.po.my](mailto:twmpen@twm.po.my); web: <http://www.twinside.org.sg>

UNCTAD HANDBOOK FOR TRADE NEGOTIATORS FROM LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES. November 1999. The Handbook explains the features of the WTO Agreements and reflects the preoccupations of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) with respect to the imbalances and the shortcomings in the Agreements. It also provides concrete proposals for addressing them, in light of experience gained so far in their implementation. To order contact: Marcel W. Namfua, UNCTAD, tel: (41-22) 907-5873; fax: 917-0044; email: [marcel.namfua@unctad.org](mailto:marcel.namfua@unctad.org); or contact Carine Richard-Van Maele, UNCTAD, tel: (41-22) 907-5816 or 907-5828; fax: (41-22) 907-0043; email: [press@unctad.org](mailto:press@unctad.org)

WORLD WILDLIFE FEDERATION POSITION PAPER: SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT OF AGRICULTURE TRADE LIBERALISATION. In this paper, the WWF calls on the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) to take a leading role in the development and implementation of sustainability assessments of agricultural trade liberalisation. To achieve this goal, four proposals to the CSD are made. To order contact: Mireille Perrin, WWF International, Avenue du Mont Blanc 27, 1196 Gland, Switzerland; tel: (41-22) 364-9026; fax: 364-8219.

- **Web Resource**

LEAGUE OF CONSERVATION VOTERS: 2000 PRESIDENTIAL PROFILES. Released on 13 January, this page lists the environmental records of all the major US presidential candidates. Available at: <http://www.lcv.org/presidential/>

*BRIDGES* Weekly Trade News Digest© is published by the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) with support from the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP). This issue has been researched at ICTSD by Dara Edmonds and Jay Wilkinson; written by Judy Brienza (IATP) and edited by Hugo Cameron, [hcameron@ictsd.ch](mailto:hcameron@ictsd.ch). The Director is Ricardo Meléndez-Ortiz, [rmelendez@ictsd.ch](mailto:rmelendez@ictsd.ch). ICTSD is an independent, not-for-profit organisation based at: 13, ch des Anémones, 1219 Geneva, Switzerland. Tel: (41- 22) 917- 8492; fax: (41-22) 917- 8093..

Excerpts from *BRIDGES* Weekly Trade News Digest© may be used in other publications with appropriate citation. Comments and suggestions are welcomed and should be directed to the Editor or the Director.

To subscribe to *BRIDGES* Weekly Trade News Digest©, send an email to: [listserv@iatp.org](mailto:listserv@iatp.org). Leave the subject line blank. In the body of the message type: subscribe bridges To unsubscribe, please send an email to [listserv@iatp.org](mailto:listserv@iatp.org). In the body of the message type: unsubscribe bridges. *BRIDGES* Weekly Trade News Digest© can also be found at the ICTSD web page: <http://www.ictsd.org/html/newsdigest.htm> and at the IATP web page: <http://www.newsbulletin.org>