



ICTSD

INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR
TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT

BRIDGES

Weekly Trade News Digest

15 May 2002

Volume 6, Number 18

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WTO UPDATES INFO DISSEMINATION, DISCUSSES INTERNAL TRANSPARENCY

At a 13-14 May meeting of the WTO General Council, Members reached an agreement to reduce the waiting time for release of restricted WTO documents. A paper submitted by India and a number of other developing countries on transparency in preparing Ministerial Conferences was also addressed, and Members approved the date and location of the WTO's Fifth Ministerial Conference, now scheduled to be held in Cancun, Mexico on 10-14 September 2003.

Document de-restriction

After four years of talks in the General Council on document de-restriction, Members agreed to loosen the rules around when restricted papers can be released (see document WT/GC/W/464/Rev.1, available shortly at http://docsonline.wto.org/gen_search.asp). Where a delegation specifically requests that a document produced by the Secretariat be restricted, the waiting time for de-restriction has been reduced from approximately eight months to 6-8 weeks. While current procedures already provide that all WTO documents be de-restricted immediately upon adoption, the new procedures essentially reduce the list of exceptions to this basic principle. Approximately 30 percent of all WTO papers are currently circulated as restricted.

Under the new provisions, documents produced by the Secretariat can be restricted by the issuing body (i.e. the Council on TRIPs), and will be de-restricted 60 days after the date of circulation. They can remain restricted for a further 30 days if so requested by a Member, after which they are automatically de-restricted. Prior practice held these documents back from six months onward. Similar restraints were previously imposed on minutes of WTO meetings. De-restriction time for these accounts of WTO proceedings have now been reduced to 45 days. Given that some WTO bodies only meet a few times a year, this might be useful for those outside the WTO following up from past meetings and preparing for forthcoming ones. Members retain the right to restrict their own submitted documents, though they must renew their restriction requests monthly after an initial period of 60 days or until first consideration by the relevant body.

The previous procedures -- outlined in a Decision of 18 July 1996 in document WT/L/160/Rev.1 -- will however remain in effect for documents circulated prior to 14 May 2002.

The new de-restriction procedures represent a compromise between developed country Members such as the US, the EC and Canada, on the one hand, and some developing countries, including India and Malaysia, on the other. Industrialised countries had been pushing for automatic de-restriction of all documents, and one developed country source said that the EC was "less than enthusiastic" with the final decision, as it had been significantly watered down from previous proposals. These Members tend to post their own submitted documents on publicly-accessible government websites. Some

developing countries were less comfortable with releasing documents related to negotiating processes, saying they preferred to maintain the right to give their capitals time to review papers before circulation.

With regard to language provisions, the procedures note that all official WTO documents that are not restricted shall be made available via the WTO website once they are translated into all three official WTO languages (English, French and Spanish).

Preparation for Ministerial Conferences

A number of interventions were made at the General Council over a document submitted by India and the Like-Minded Group (LMG) of developing countries on transparency and participation leading up to and during Ministerial Conferences (WT/GC/W/471). Trade sources said that the LMG paper was in part a response to procedures followed in the preparatory process to the November 2001 Doha Ministerial and at Doha itself.

In its submission, the LMG proposes a number of elements to guide the Ministerial preparatory processes and those followed at Ministerial Conferences themselves, with the intent of creating a more automatic and predictable process than currently exists. Inter alia, these include: (i) making all consultations transparent and open-ended; (ii) the draft ministerial declaration should be based on consensus, and where this is not possible, differences should be fully and appropriately reflected (i.e. through square brackets); (iii) the Director-General and the Secretariat should remain impartial on the specific issues in the declaration; (iv) chairpersons at Ministerial Conferences should be identified by consensus in the preparatory process in Geneva; consultations by chairs should be only at meetings open to all Members, with meetings announced "at least a few hours in advance"; (v) negotiating texts and draft decisions should be introduced only in open-ended meetings; and (vi) late night meetings and negotiating sessions should be avoided. The paper also suggested that there could be a case for holding all future Ministerial Conferences after Mexico (in 2003) in Geneva to save in cost and effort.

Most Members recognised that the process followed before and at Doha was an improvement over previous negotiations. Many industrialised country Members and some more economically advanced developing country delegations responded negatively to the LMG proposals. They said the LMG provisions would impose too much of a "straight jacket" on the consultation process, with one trade source commenting that were the stricter consultation provisions in the paper adopted, it would drive the real negotiations underground and ultimately lead to a less transparent procedure. Some of these responses came from Norway and Hong Kong-China. Ambassadors from both of these Members -- Kare Bryn and Stuart Harbinson, respectively -- previously served as General Council Chairs and were involved in transparency-related consultations around Ministerial Conferences and other areas in 2000 and 2001.

General Council Chair Sergio Marchi said that the issue would remain on the agenda for the next meeting so that Members could make further formal interventions, then on the basis of these he would engage in further informal consultations on the matter.

Cancun selected as venue for next Ministerial

Ending months of speculation over when and where the next Ministerial Conference would be held, Members agreed on 13 May that the Fifth Ministerial Conference will take place in Cancun, Mexico on 10-14 September, 2003. Cancun was chosen, the Mexican delegation said, because of its hotel zone, which is clustered in such a way that the WTO meeting shouldn't disturb the local population too drastically. Inter alia, the Cancun meeting is the deadline for Members to present draft schedules for agriculture negotiations and to decide on modalities for launching negotiations on the Singapore issues of investment, competition, transparency in government procurement, and trade facilitation. It comes at the midway point in the WTO's mandated Doha negotiations.

Mexican Ambassador Eduardo Perez Motta said Cancun had 20,000 hotel rooms and conference facilities for 6,000. As such, according to WTO sources, the scale of potential participation would likely be closer to Seattle than to Doha, where space constraints led to severe restrictions on possible attendees, including non-governmental participants.

"WTO Ministerial Fixed for Cancun in September 2003," ASSOCIATED PRESS, 13 May 2002; ICTSD Internal Files.

NEW US FARM BILL UPSETS WTO PARTNERS, COULD HURT DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

A new US farm bill signed into law by US President George W. Bush on 13 May has met with severe disapproval by a number of the country's trading partners. Mercosur -- the largest trading bloc of agricultural exporting countries in Latin America -- is considering a challenge at the WTO of the US legislation, which is estimated to increase subsidies to the agricultural sector by 80 percent to the tune of at least \$US82 billion over the next decade. Other WTO Members and US government officials have also highlighted possible inconsistencies between the bill and the US' obligations under WTO rules. The bill comes at a time when the US is under increasing criticism for its trade policies, most notably its recent decision to impose tariffs on steel imports of up to 30 percent (see BRIDGES Weekly, 16 April 2002; <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/02-04-16/story5.htm#3>).

Bush's signature of the farm bill follows approval by the US House of Representatives on 2 May (see BRIDGES Weekly, 2 May 2002, at <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/02-05-02/inbrief.htm#3>) and of the US Senate on 8 May. "This bill is generous and will provide a safety net for farmers, and it will do so without encouraging overproduction and depressing prices," Bush said in a ceremony at the White House. Commenting on international concerns over the new legislation -- which is expected to raise total US agricultural subsidies to \$US180 billion over ten years -- Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee and a major proponent of the new policy Tom Harkin said the new farm

legislation "is not for European farmers and South American farmers. This is for our farmers."

Mercosur considers WTO challenge

According to diplomats, Mercosur members Argentina and Brazil are considering a challenge at the WTO against the bill, arguing that it would enable US producers of commodities such as soy, cotton and cereals to offer their products at prices below those they currently offer on international markets. Both official and private accounts forecast the two countries to suffer combined losses of some \$US3.9 billion per year due to a drop in exports caused by the expected price distortions. The new farm bill will particularly affect the soy exporters of the Mercosur countries, according to Argentina's Agriculture Secretary Rafael Delpech.

Commenting on the farm bill's passage through the US Senate, Argentine President Eduardo Duhalde said, "the United States preaches free trade but then are the most obscene protectionists." For its part, Brazil criticised the bill for being detrimental to international trade, while Mercosur member Paraguay described the new farm legislation as "a big step backward" in meeting the WTO targets. A top farm group official of the fourth member of the South American bloc -- Uruguay -- accused Washington of "telling two different stories" at international fora, adding that the US "clamours against subsidies but, when push comes to shove, it opts for protectionism."

Brazilian news agency Agencia Brasil reported on 9 May that Brazil would file a request with the WTO's Dispute Settlement Body on consultations with the US over the subsidies the US government was expected to adopt for soybean crops. Brazil's Foreign Ministry, however, has not yet confirmed whether Brazil will also formally challenge the new US farm bill itself at the global trade body. The US is the world's largest producer of soy, with a 30 percent share at the world market, followed by Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay.

Trade experts see development at risk

The World Bank, which has persistently advocated cutting agricultural subsidies in OECD nations, called 13 May "a sad day for world farmers". According to its data, cotton exporters in West and Central Africa alone would gain further \$US250 million in revenues per annum if the US -- the world's biggest cotton producer -- stopped subsidising domestic cotton production. But the increase in US farm support, analysts forecast, could further depress world commodity prices, making imports cheaper than local products in the developing world and ultimately forcing domestic farmers out of business.

The US government, together with the Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the WTO, has previously urged poor countries to open up their markets for products from rich nations by cutting tariffs and reducing non-tariff barriers. Moreover, the newly negotiated Doha Declaration -- dubbed by many the 'Doha Development Agenda' -- requires Members to negotiate towards "substantial reductions in trade-distorting

domestic support" as well as "reductions of, with a view to phasing out, all forms of export subsidies."

The farm bill "may not yet have killed the new round of trade negotiations, but has made even less credible the claims about a 'development agenda' at Doha," a Southern trade expert commented.

More criticism from inside and outside US

Strong criticism of the bill was also voiced from a number of other trading partners. Australia expressed its disappointment with the new US farm policy, which it said would jeopardise international efforts to reform the global agricultural trade regime. According to Trade Minister Mark Vaile, Australia will now assess the US farm bill in more detail to establish whether it is allowed under international trade rules. "We are going to critically analyse the elements and we reserve the right to ensure it is compliant with US obligations under the WTO," Vaile said. The EU also reportedly said it might challenge the US farm subsidies at the WTO. Furthermore, Canada expressed its concern, saying that the new law contradicted US calls for freer farm trade.

According to WTO provisions, US farm subsidies notified under the so- called 'Amber Box' cannot exceed \$US19.1 billion annually. The new farm legislation authorises the US Department of Agriculture to adjust subsidies to stay under the WTO cap. Several farm bill critics, however, have voiced their doubts whether the USDA would take such politically unpopular steps simply to avoid a breach of the US' WTO commitments.

Criticism of the bill was also voiced from inside the US. Senior Republican Senator Charles Grassley warned that the bill would undermine efforts by the US to reduce agricultural subsidies in Europe and other countries. "I cannot think of a more effective way to undermine everything we have worked for, and everything we hope to accomplish at the negotiating table during the next three years, than to pass a farm bill that we know might break our WTO obligations," he said.

The four Mercosur partners (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) and Australia are members of the Cairns Group of agriculture exporting WTO Member States. The Cairns Group has been the key demandeur in the GATT/WTO agriculture negotiations, calling for the elimination of export subsidies, opening up markets and reducing subsidisation in the global agriculture sector. Traditionally, the US has been a supporter of Cairns Group positions.

"Opponents Unite To Decry US Farm Subsidies," IPS UN JOURNAL, 14 May 2002; "US Farm Bill Poses 'Threat' To Trade Talks," FT, 13 May 2002; "Bush Returns To Subsidies To Support Farmers," FT, 13 May 2002; "Mercosur Prepares Offensive Against Increased US Farm Subsidies," EFE via COMTEX, 10 May 2002; "The Americas: Senate Approval For Farm Subsidies Boost," FT, 9 May 2002; "Farm Bill Gains Senate Approval," WASHINGTON POST, 9 May 2002; "Brazil To Appeal To WTO Over Soybean Subsidies," KYODO NEWS, 9 May 2002; "Australia To Check US Farm Bill Complies With WTO Rules," REUTERS, 13 May 2002.

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES FACING FIRST TESTS AS DEADLINES QUICKLY APPROACH

With a number of implementation issues facing mid-year and end-of-year deadlines, various regular and special session committees have been working steadfastly since the adoption of the Doha work programme last November (see BRIDGES Weekly, 15 November 2001, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/01-11-15/story1.htm>). Coming together in both formal and informal sessions, Members have been attempting to gain ground on meeting the Doha work programme, whose scope of activities vary from reporting to the General Council on the state of the discussions, to reporting with "clear recommendations for a decision". Some items that have seen airtime in recent weeks include antidumping, textiles, and special and differential treatment.

Background

Implementation issues have been prevalent in ongoing discussions at the WTO virtually since the coming into force of the Uruguay Round Agreements. Increasingly since the Seattle preparatory process, developing countries began to focus on implementation in terms of addressing the 'implementation of existing agreements' in order to redress perceived imbalances in those Agreements. This concern stems >from the perception that the Uruguay Round agreements have failed to generate anticipated benefits - partly because of incomplete implementation of commitments by developed countries and unsatisfactory 'operationalisation' of special and differential treatment provisions.

In the context of deadlines for implementation-related issues, para. 12 (b) of the Doha Ministerial Declaration notes that "the other outstanding implementation issues shall be addressed...by the end of 2002 for appropriate action." However, considerable debate exists over the full interpretation of this provision (for an in-depth discussion of implementation issues, see ICTSD's Trade Negotiations Insight, February 2002, http://www.ictsd.org/tni/tni_english/TNI1_EN.pdf).

Antidumping a crucial element of a new round

On 22 April, an informal session of the working group on implementation of the Committee on Anti-dumping Practices (ADP) met to discuss one of the three items tasked to it by the Decision on Implementation emanating from Doha.

Para. 7.3 of the Decision notes that Article 5.8 of the WTO Agreement on Antidumping "does not specify the time-frame to be used in determining the volume of dumped imports, and that this lack of specificity creates uncertainties in the implementation of the provision." It furthermore instructs the working group to come up with recommendations "with a view to ensuring the maximum possible predictability and objectivity in the application of time frames" within 12 months (i.e. by November 2002).

Discussions at the session focused around two proposals -- one from the EC and one from Indonesia.

The EC proposal provides three options for the reference period of the determination of dumping -- 12 months prior to when an antidumping petition is filed; 12 months prior to the start of an antidumping investigation; and 12 months covering the period of the investigation itself. The Indonesian proposal, supported by some large developed and developing country Members, supported the use of the period of investigation for all cases.

With the aim of the discussions to "ensur[e] the maximum possible predictability and objectivity in the application of time frames," some sources see less importance on which method is chosen, but rather that everyone is using the same one.

Agreement was not reached at the session; as a result, the Chair will conduct further consultations at future meetings of the working group.

EU reviews anti-dumping practices

In a related matter, the EU announced on 8 May that it would review its use of certain import restrictions based on a previous assessment that exposed flaws in its appraisal of whether Indian imports were dumped in its markets. (see BRIDGES Weekly, 6 March 2001, <http://www.ictsd.org/html/weekly/story3.06-03-01.htm>). The Union will now undertake an assessment of whether any other country is affected by anti-dumping measures using the flawed methods.

Textiles implementation agenda still awaiting momentum

On 2 May, the Council for Trade in Goods met to discuss, inter alia, two issues mandated for examination in paragraphs 4.4 and 4.5 of the Decision on Implementation. Discussions on these items are to see recommendations put forward to the General Council by 31 July 2002.

The two implementation proposals under the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC) cover the use of the most favourable methodology for calculating the expansion of textile quotas for small suppliers and least-developed countries; and the advance expansion of quotas for developing countries.

While sources indicate these proposals received a less-than-lukewarm reception from some developed country Members, all Members agreed to participate in future informal meetings on the issue. In that respect, Chair Ambassador Supperamaniam from Malaysia suggested four one-day informal meetings in May and June to consider these proposals further. At time of press, these dates were not yet available.

The Council's next regular meeting is scheduled for 23-24 May 2002.

Substantive discussions on S&D set to begin

With the third meeting of the Committee on Trade and Development's special session on special and differential treatment (S&D) scheduled for 16 May, Members will see the

first substantive discussions on the Doha mandate of making S&D more "precise, effective, and operational" (see BRIDGES Weekly, 16 April 2002, at <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/02-04-16/story2.htm>).

The Doha mandate specifies two particular objectives on which the special session is to "report to the General Council with clear recommendations for a decision by July 2002." These are, firstly, to identify those S&D provisions which are mandatory / non-mandatory, consider the legal implications of making non-mandatory provisions mandatory, and identify those provisions which Members consider should be made mandatory. Secondly, Members are to examine additional ways in which S&D provisions can be made more effective and to consider ways that developing country Members can make better use of S&D provisions.

As such, Chair Ambassador Ransford Smith from Jamaica scheduled four meetings prior to the deadline -- 16 May, 14 June, 2 & 17 July. The May and June meetings have been specifically designated for submitting proposals on the objectives (outlined above) falling under the 31 July deadline.

The 16 May meeting will consider submitted proposals on a number of agreements, including Agriculture, Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS), Textiles (ATC), Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), TRIMs (investment measures), Antidumping (Article XI of GATT 94), and the Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU). In addition to an Indian proposal on import licensing, SPS and DSU submitted at the 9 April session (see BRIDGES Weekly link above), two more proposals have been submitted from a group of developing countries (searchable under the TN/CTD/ series at http://docsonline.wto.org/gen_search.asp). Proposals >from a number of countries are expected, covering both agreement-by- agreement and cross-cutting approaches.

With regards to the Indian proposals made at the previous session, some discussion is expected on the 16th. Sources indicate some Members are watching attentively to see how these discussions play out as an indication of how much Members appear willing to tackle implementation at this time.

Further coverage will be provided in next week's issue of BRIDGES Weekly.

"EU Commission To Review Anti-Dumping Practices," DOW JONES, 8 May 2002; ICTSD Internal Files.

In Brief

ASEAN AND CHINA TO BEGIN FREE TRADE TALKS

The first round of talks aimed at creating the world's largest free trade area encompassing China and the 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will be held on 15-16 May in Beijing, China. Discussions will focus on a framework prepared by Singapore, which covers trade in goods and services, investment and human resources development. The talks follow a decision taken during the annual ASEAN-China summit last November where governments had agreed to forge the free trade zone in 10 years. Countries, however, remain divided over the details of the agreement, including its scope and timeframe. In particular, the less developed ASEAN members -- Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam -- are hoping be granted more time to complete the tariff reduction plan, to be allowed to set higher end rates in their tariff reduction plan or to get special preferential tariff offers from China. Singapore and Thailand, the strongest supporters of the trade liberalisation plan, advocate that ASEAN should aim for an eight-year plan, while others support a longer time frame than 10 years. ASEAN members include Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The China-ASEAN free trade area would cover a market of nearly 1.8 billion people, a regional gross domestic product of \$US2 trillion and international trade worth \$US1.2 trillion.

"Asean readies for tough talks on free trade area with China," KYODO, 11 May 2002.

NO PROGRESS AT CODEX ON GM FOOD LABELLING

Delegates at a meeting of the Codex Committee On Food Labelling on 6-10 May in Halifax, Canada, made virtually no headway on the contentious issue of labelling genetically modified (GM) foods, largely repeating previously stated positions (see BRIDGES Weekly, 8 May 2001; <http://www.ictsd.org/html/weekly/08-05-01/story3.htm>). While making some progress on the purpose of the draft recommendations by agreeing to include the facilitation of "consumer choice" as one of the objectives, countries remained deeply divided over definitions and the recommendations' scope, including whether the draft recommendations should also apply to GM foods derived from, but no longer containing, GM organisms. Divisions were also apparent on 'country of origin' labelling, which several delegates argued should not be discussed in Codex at this stage, but should rather await finalisation of the definitions currently being worked out in the WTO Committee on Rules of Origin. Others, however, pointed out that the debate at Codex differed >from that at the WTO as it was only concerned with labelling.

Documents of the meeting are available at
http://www.codexalimentarius.net/ccf130/f102_01e.htm.

WTO In Brief

WTO CIRCULATES NGO PAPERS IN TRANSPARENCY EXERCISE

As a part of recent initiatives on greater transparency and enhanced dialogue with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (see Bridges Weekly, 18 April, 2001, <http://www.ictsd.org/html/weekly/18-04-01/story2.htm>), the WTO Secretariat circulated on 3 May a list of NGO position papers that delegations were invited to consult. The initiative is in accordance with the Guidelines for Arrangements on Relations With Non-Governmental Organisations (WT/L/162) that provides among others for "informal arrangements to receive the information NGOs may wish to make available for consultation by interested delegations".

The list of position papers that were received before 1 May includes submissions from the Center for Science and Environment, based in India, and Northern based NGOs such as the Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN) in Brussels and the Centre of Concern in Washington D.C. (For a complete list of papers please see http://www.wto.org/english/forums_e/ngo_e/pospap_e.htm). Other NGO position papers were received from the International Financial Services, London, the International Road Transport Union and the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry.

ICTSD Internal Files.

RULES GROUP DISCUSSES WTO PROVISIONS APPLYING TO RTAS

The WTO Negotiating Group on Rules discussed on 8 May an Australian proposal (TN/RL/W/2, searchable at http://www.wto.org/english/info_e/search_e.htm) on regional trade agreements (RTAs), which was received by many Members as a good starting point for negotiations -- as mandated by para. 28 of the Doha Declaration -- aimed at clarifying and improving existing WTO disciplines and procedures applying to RTAs. In its paper, Australia said that governments turning to more bilateral and plurilateral agreements represented a threat to the multilateral trading system. The paper proposed holding talks on procedural issues and systemic issues separately. In their comments on the Australian submission, Members expressed the need to make RTAs a complement to, not a substitute for, multilateralism. Furthermore, the WTO Secretariat was requested to update its paper on RTAs by the 8-10 July Rules Group meeting. RTAs were discussed on the last day of the 6-8 May Rules Group special (negotiating) session (see BRIDGES Weekly, 2 May 2002, at <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/07-05-02/story1.htm>).

ICTSD Internal Files.

EC ANNOUNCES STEEL PANEL REQUEST, KEEPS OTHER OPTIONS OPEN

On 7 May, the European Commission announced that it had formally presented a request to the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) for the establishment of a WTO panel to examine the legality of steel safeguard measures imposed by the US on steel imports. EC spokesperson Anthony Gooch said after a meeting of the 133 Committee (the EC body dealing with trade negotiations according to Article 133 of the EC's Treaty of Rome) that all 15 members of the European trade bloc had "lent unanimous support to the Commission in its strategy to respond to the illegal safeguard measures taken by the US on steel in late March." The EC declared that it would further submit a so-called "long list" of potential sanctions prior to 17 May, which would be applied in case the US did not immediately remove its safeguard measures. In parallel, the Commission has said it will notify to the WTO a "short list" of potential suspensions of concessions so as to reserve its rights under the WTO Safeguards Agreement. Unlike the Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU), under which proceedings can take up to two years to complete, trade sanction under the WTO Agreement on Safeguards could be applied in a month's time (see BRIDGES Weekly, 16 April 2002, at <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/02-04-16/story5.htm>). The Commission voiced its hope that sanctions [imposed prior to a WTO panel ruling] would "not be necessary in light of progress concerning the compensation negotiations." At a recent 2 May summit of European and US leaders in the hope of settling this looming trade dispute, however, no tangible resolution emerged, but leaders pledged to intensify efforts to address this and other disputes (see BRIDGES Weekly, 7 May 2002, at <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/07-05-02/inbrief.htm>).

"EU Ministers Back Commission Strategy On US Steel Safeguards," EC PRESS RELEASE, 7 May 2002; "EU Approves Retaliation For US Steel Tariffs; Seeks WTO Dispute Panel: EC Countries Back Sanctions Worth US\$300 Million," REUTERS, 8 May 2002.

DISAGREEMENT PERSISTS AT SCM OVER CHINA'S TRANSITIONAL REVIEW MECHANISM

At the resumed meeting of the Committee on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures held on 3 and 8 May (see BRIDGES Weekly, 7 May 2002, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/02-05-07/wtoinbrief.htm#2>), the US, EC and Japan argued for the need to have preparatory procedures in place to facilitate a meaningful fall meeting under China's transitional review mechanism while assuring China that they did not wish to add any new accession obligations. Welcoming questions from other delegations in advance of the fall meeting, China said it would convey the statements to Beijing. China maintained that it would reject any attempt to add new obligations beyond those in its accession protocol, adding that it would also raise concerns about trade restrictions imposed on it by other Members. Under paragraph 18 of China's Protocol of Accession, the WTO is required to conduct an annual review of China's compliance with WTO Agreements for which Beijing is requested to provide information on relevant trade-related economic data as well as on WTO-relevant economic policies, laws and regulations. China did not want this item included in the SCM agenda, as the review was

scheduled for autumn and China wanted to avoid the impression that a regular -- rather than an annual review -- was being held. The Committee will hold the review on China at its fall meeting (week of 28 October 2002).

ICTSD Internal Files.

Events & Resources

EVENTS

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

Coming Up This Week: 15-21 May

13-15 May, Paris, France: OECD FORUM 2002. The OECD Forum is an international public conference offering business, labour and civil society the opportunity to discuss key issues with government ministers and leaders of international organisations. With the overarching theme of "Taking Care of the Fundamentals: Security, Equity, Education and Growth," the Forum will allow participants to provide inputs to the OECD annual ministerial summit meeting to be held on 15-16 May 2002. For further information contact: OECD Forum; fax: (330-14) 430-6346; email: oe.cd.forum@oe.cd.org; Internet: <http://www1.oecd.org/forum2002/>. From IISD Linkages: <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/journal>.

13-17 May, Maracay, Venezuela: BIOSAFETY 3 - ADVANCED ISSUES ON BIOSAFETY: RISK MONITORING AND PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF BIOTECHNOLOGY. Organised by Centro Nacional de Investigaciones Agropecuarias/CENIAP (Maracay, Venezuela) and Centro Tecnológico Polar (Caracas, Venezuela). Postponed from 12-16 November 2001. For further information, contact: Dr. Efraim G. Salazar Yamarte; tel: (58-43) 471066; fax: 471066, 831421; email: efra63@hotmail.com; Internet: <http://www.icgeb.trieste.it/~bsafesrv/bsfn0011.htm>.

13-17 May, Leiden, Netherlands: 12TH MEETING OF THE CITES PLANTS COMMITTEE. For more information contact: CITES Secretariat; tel: (41 22) 917 8148; fax: 917 8139; email: cites@unep.ch; Internet: http://www.cites.org/eng/cttee/plants/12/general_info.shtml.

15 May, London, UK: DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND THE WTO CONSTITUTION. Organised by the British Institute of International and Comparative Law, with cooperation from the Georgetown University Institute of International Economic Law and the London Forum for International Economic and Development Law. The conference will focus on WTO dispute settlement and its evolving jurisprudence,

focusing on subjects such as deference and sovereignty, reforms needed, relationship of the dispute settlement process to the diplomatic and negotiating activities of the WTO, and compliance problems. For further information contact: The British Institute of International and Comparative Law, tel: (44 207) 862 5151; fax: 862 5152; email: info@biicl.org; Internet: <http://www.biicl.org/>.

15-16 May Paris, France: OECD ANNUAL MINISTERIAL SUMMIT. Ministers from Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries will meet to review the outlook for the world economy and policy challenges relating to trade, governance, development and the environment. Their discussions will follow on from the OECD Forum 2002 on 13-15 May, which will bring together representatives of civil society, business and labour with government ministers and leaders of international organisations. For further information contact: OECD Secretariat, 2, rue André Pascal, F-75775 Paris Cedex 16, France; tel: (33 145) 248-200; Internet: <http://www.icts.or>.

16 May, Geneva, Switzerland: PRECAUTION IN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY-MAKING. This roundtable, organised jointly by the Geneva Environment Network and the Swiss Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape (SAEFL), will examine Principle 15, how precaution has been applied since Rio and why it remains so important for the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). For further information contact: Aniket Ghai, tel: (41 22) 917 8505; fax: 797 3464; email: aniket.ghai@unep.ch.

16-17 May, London, UK: SECOND ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL AND COMPARATIVE COMPETITION LAW. Entitled "Trends and Tensions: International and Comparative Competition Law," the conference follows the successful First Annual Conference held in May 2001. For further information contact: The British Institute of International and Comparative Law, tel: (44 207) 862 5151; fax: 862 5152; email: info@biicl.org; Internet: <http://www.biicl.org>.

17-18 May, Madrid, Spain: EU-LATIN AMERICA/CARIBBEAN SUMMIT. The meeting aims to assess the progress made by the partnership since Rio; and to propose to the Heads of State and Government political priorities and an action plan to be adopted in order to ensure progress by the strategic partnership in Madrid in May 2002. For further information, see <http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/lac/index.htm>.

19-22 May, Quebec, Canada: WORLD ECOTOURISM SUMMIT. The World Ecotourism summit is expected to be the largest ever gathering of stakeholders involved in or affected by ecotourism. The objectives of the summit, inter alia, are to open a wide review on the potential contribution of ecotourism to sustainable development, to exchange information on good practice techniques and lessons learned in the sustainable planning, development, management and marketing of ecotourism and to advance the knowledge of the social, economic and environmental impacts of ecotourism. For further information contact: Ecotourisme 2002 Secretariat; tel: (1 418) 692 1699; fax: 692 5587; email: ecotourism2002@jpd.com; Internet: <http://www.ecotourism2002.org/>.

20 May, Shimonoseki, Japan: 54TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION. The Scientific Committee and Commission Committees and Working Groups will be meeting at the same venue. For further information contact: IWC Secretariat; tel: (44 122) 323-3971; email: secretariat@iwcoffice.org; Internet: http://www.iwcoffice.org/2002_meeting.htm.

21 May, Geneva, Switzerland: IS THE WORLD TRADE SYSTEM RIGGED AGAINST THE POOR? At the occasion of the launch of its trade campaign, OXFAM is organising a debate on the findings of OXFAM's new report "Rigged rules and double standards: trade, globalisation and the fight against poverty" and its implications for on-going negotiations. The meeting will be held at the Centre de conférence de Varembé – CCV, Salle A, 9 rue de Varembé, Geneva. For further information contact: Romain Benicchio, tel: (41 22) 321 23 72; fax: 321 27 53; email: romain.benicchio@oxfaminternational.org.

21-23 May, Brussels, Belgium: EUROPEAN COMMISSION MEETING WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS CONCERNING THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE OF THE WTO. The purpose of the meeting is to have an exchange of views with the European Commission on the various subjects on the agenda of the next Special Session of the WTO Committee on Agriculture. For further information contact: Robert Norris, tel: (32 2) 299 01 26; Internet: http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/external/wto/dialogue/index_en.htm.

WTO Events

An updated list of forthcoming WTO meetings is posted at: http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/meets.doc. 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 the different bodies. Unless otherwise indicated, all WTO meetings are held at the WTO, Centre William Rappard, rue de Lausanne 154, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland.

13-15 May, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO GENERAL COUNCIL.

14 May, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO COMMITTEE ON IMPORT LICENSING.

14-16 May, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO TEXTILES MONITORING BODY.

15 May, 16:00, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO NGO BRIEFING ON 13-15 May WTO GENERAL COUNCIL. Will be held in Room A (ground floor).

16 May, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO SPECIAL SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT.

17 May, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO INFORMAL SPECIAL SESSION OF THE COUNCIL FOR TRADE-RELATED ASPECTS OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS.

Other Forthcoming Events

22 May, Brussels, Belgium: THE ROLE OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE EU DEVELOPMENT POLICY. Organised by the Economic And Social Committee. For further information contact: Ellen Durst, tel: (32 2) 546 90 11; fax: 513 48 93; email: ellen.durst@esc.EU.in.

23-24 May, Brussels, Belgium: L'ACCORD DE COTONOU, UNE AUTRE PARTICIPATION POSSIBLE? Organised by GRESEA/ AITEC/ Groupe des Verts/ALE. For further information contact: GREASEA, tel: (32 2) 219 70 76; fax: 219 64 86; email: greasea@skynet.be.

29 May, Brussels, Belgium: INSTRUMENTS FOR ENGENDERING TRADE AGREEMENTS. Organised by Network Women in Development (WIDE) with the support of the Greens-EFA Group. For further information contact: WIDE, tel: (32 2) 545 90 70; fax: 512 73 42; email: mk.wide@xs4all.be; Internet: http://www.eurosur.org/wide/Presentation_EP.htm.

27-31 May, Geneva, Switzerland: INTERNATIONAL TRADE FACILITATION WEEK. Organised by the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The principal events of this week are: 27 - 28 May: The 2002 plenary session of the Centre for Trade Facilitation and e-business; 28 & 31 May: The 2002 session of the Committee for Trade, Industry and Enterprise Development (CTIED); 29 - 30 May: The International Forum on Trade Facilitation being organised together with the UNCTAD, the other UN regional commissions, the WTO, the World Customs Organization (WCO), and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), at the UN in Geneva; 31 May: The CTIED round table on, "Implementing Trade Facilitation in Transition Economies". For further information contact: Mario Apostolov, Forum Coordinator; UN/ECE, Trade Division, tel: (41 22) 917 1134; fax: 917 0037; email: mario.apostolov@unece.org; Internet: <http://www.unece.org/trade/forums/forum02/index.htm>.

3-7 June, Bergen, Norway: 25TH SESSION OF THE CODEX COMMITTEE ON FISH AND FISHERY PRODUCTS. Organised by FAO. For more information contact the Secretariat of the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme, tel: (39 06) 570-51; fax: 5705-4593; email: codex@fao.org; Internet: http://www.codexalimentarius.net/ccffp25/fp02_01e.htm.

21-25 June, Alberta, Canada: G6B THE PEOPLE'S SUMMIT. Organised by the International Society for Peace and Human Rights at the occasion of the Summit of the eight most industrialised democracies (G8) on 26-27 June. The meeting aims to offer a forum to generate and discuss ideas and solutions that will promote economic activities that are beneficial to people living in all parts of our world, but that also reflect full respect for human rights and the environment. For further information contact: Lynn Foster, tel: (1 403) 202 0638; email: fosterlf@shaw.ca; Internet: <http://www.peaceandhumanrights.org/#g6b>.

10-12 July, Geneva, Switzerland: UNCTAD EXPERT MEETING ON ELECTRONIC COMMERCE STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT: THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR E-COMMERCE. Organised by the UN Conference on Trade and Development. For further information contact: Ms. Susan Teltscher, tel: (41 22) 917 5509; fax: 917 0044; email: susan.teltscher@unctad.org; Internet: <http://www.unctad.org/en/special/c3em15no.htm>.

19-22 August, Wellington, New Zealand: CONFERENCE ON FISHERIES IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY. The event is organised by the International Institute of Fisheries Economics and Trade (IIFET), and will provide a forum for participants to consider the future management of fisheries. For more information contact: IIFET 2002 Organiser; tel: (64 4) 389 3487; fax: 389 3457; email: bruce.shallard@extra.co.nz; Internet: <http://www.iifet2002.co>.

21-28 August, Victoria, Canada: 2002 WORLD ORGANIC CONGRESS - CULTIVATING COMMUNITIES. Organised by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM), the event is expected to be attended by farmers, researchers, advisors, food processors, traders, certifiers, policy makers and consumers and others interested in organic agriculture and sustainable development. For more information contact the IFOAM 2002 Office, tel: (1 250) 655 5652; email: ifoam2002@cog.ca; Internet: <http://www.cog.ca/ifoam2002/>.

RESOURCES

If you have a relevant resource (books, papers, bulletins, etc.) you would like to see announced in this section, please forward a copy for review by the BRIDGES staff to Hugo Cameron, hcameron@ictsd.ch. Submissions of publications to ICTSD's documentation centre would also be welcome (contact Matteo Rizzolli, mrizzolli@ictsd.ch).

"Triangulating The World Trade Organization," by Steve Charnovitz in THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL LAW (96, 2002): 28-55. The article aims to present an analytic method for considering proposals to expand the scope of the WTO by organising the contending ideas about the rationale for the WTO and showing how varying assumptions can lead to different conclusions on the proper content of international trade law.

"Export processing zones and the quest for sustainable development: a Southern African perspective," by Herbert Jauch in: ENVIRONMENT AND URBANIZATION 14 (1, 2002): 101-113. The paper discusses why export processing zones provide little prospect of addressing Southern Africa's economic problems and also threaten regional cooperation. It describes the 'race to the bottom' as governments in the region compete for foreign investment by lowering labour standards, often restricting union rights and offering incentives to foreign firms that are so costly that they greatly limit the net benefits of the new investments to the national or local economy.

"Local Responses to Globalization and Peripheralization in Luanda, Angola," by Paul Jenkins Paul Robson Allan Cain in *ENVIRONMENT AND URBANIZATION* 14 (1, 2002): 115-127. Questions the benefits of globalisation for Luanda by considering how global political and economic forces affect the lives of its 3.4 million inhabitants. The paper concludes that the key globalisation issue for Luanda (and Angola) is not how to ensure a more effective trickle-down of benefits from export-led growth, but how more people can be productively engaged in the development process.

"Environment And Trade: A Review of Issues and Methods," by Haixiao Huang and Walter C. Labys in *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES* 2 (1-2, 2002): 100-160. This survey attempts to provide an overview of the major issues concerning economic interactions between environmental and trade policies. It provides a perspective on received and future research by employing a dual approach: economic studies of the major environmental and trade issues are analysed first and then progress in the methods necessary to analyse their interactions is assessed second. The conclusions suggest new possibilities for research design and policy goals.

"Race to the Top: The Biases of the WTO Regime," by Carl Pope in *HARVARD INTERNATIONAL REVIEW* 23 (4, 2002): 62-66. According to the author, environmentalists do not seek to use international trade to set air pollution standards for New Delhi, water pollution rules in Johannesburg, or standards for genetically modified foods in Italy and do not expect the WTO to solve the world's environmental problems. Instead, the paper argues, they hope it will not worsen those problems or tilt the playing field against efforts in other arenas to achieve planetary sustainability.

"Technical Cooperation, Capacity-Building And The Doha Work Programme," by Chandrakant Patel in *THIRD WORLD ECONOMICS* (270, 2001): 14-16. Often dangled as an incentive to secure developing-country acceptance of new trade obligations, capacity-building programmes have to date been largely found wanting in terms of both the quantity and quality of technical assistance rendered, the paper argues. The article discusses whether the promises of capacity building contained in the WTO's newly agreed Doha Ministerial Declaration can indeed be translated into meaningful cooperation.

UK LEGAL SYSTEM FAILS TO DETER WILDLIFE TRAFFICKERS. Commissioned by WWF and TRAFFIC, 2002. According to the report, some of the world's most endangered animals are being pushed towards extinction by British traffickers who are encouraged by weak wildlife laws. As a result, WWF and TRAFFIC are calling for the maximum sentence for illegal wildlife trade in the UK to be increased from two to five years imprisonment; and sentencing guidelines to be issued to magistrates and judges on the appropriate penalties for wildlife crime. The report is available at http://www.wwf.org.uk/News/n_0000000557.asp.

BIODIVERSITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS: THE INTERNATIONAL RULES FOR THE PROTECTION OF BIODIVERSITY. By Elli Louka, March 2002. This study prescribes a comprehensive system for the protection of biodiversity. Human rights standards, free trade in wildlife and regulated free access to plant genetic resources are proposed as

elements of this system. For further information see <http://www.transnationalpubs.com/showbook.cfm?bookid=10174>.

HANDBOOK OF BIODIVERSITY VALUATION: A GUIDE FOR POLICY MAKERS. Published by the OECD Working Group on the Economic Aspects of Biodiversity, 2002. The Handbook is a practical tool, aimed at policy-makers and practitioners interested in using valuation tools for the effective management of biodiversity. Rather than offering an exhaustive catalogue of valuation methods, it emphasises the major methodologies that are available, illustrated by examples of how they can be applied. For further information see <http://www.oecdwash.org/PUBS/BOOKS/RP022/rp022env.htm>.

Electronic Resources

NEW NGO WEBSITE TO MONITOR ACP-EU TRADE NEGOTIATIONS. 11.11.11, a Belgian NGO network, and member of non-governmental group Eurostep, has launched a new website aimed at monitoring the trade negotiations between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP). Entitled EPA Watch -- <http://www.epawatch.net> -- it is intended to contribute to making the negotiations on new trade ACP-EU trade arrangements or Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) open and transparent so as to ensure that the new trade arrangements contribute to sustainable development in the ACP. 11.11.11 invite all to send relevant information (analysis, papers, documents, addresses, links) to info@epawatch.net.

ACP-EU TRADE NEGOTIATIONS - ENSURING EPAS ARE AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR DEVELOPMENT. The EU-LDC Network has launched an 8 week-long internet discussion aimed at identifying possible issues of common interest for the all-ACP-EU negotiations which would ensure that Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) are an effective development tool. At the end of the debate a summary of the discussion will be published. Participants can register at <http://www.eu-ldc.org/forums/Default.asp>. For further information visit <http://www.eu-ldc.org/src/fora.asp>.

The Centre For International Trade, Economics & Environment (CITEE) of the Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) has released its report of the meeting "Trade and Social Development: A Southern Viewpoint", organised by CUTS-CITEE on 1 May 2002 in the context of WTO public symposium. The report is available at http://www.cuts.org/T&SD_Geneva_1May02.htm.

Position Vacancy

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation is looking for a Project Assistant, to be based in Washington, D.C., who will support the Foundation's international and special programs, through grant administration and other tasks related to management of the Foundation's grant database; and complete projects of special need as determined by the supervisor. For further information contact: Karen Sprecher-Keating; email: karen.sprecherkeating@nfwf.org.

A searchable archive of **BRIDGES Weekly Trade News Digest**© can be accessed at: http://www.newsbulletin.org/bulletins/WhichBulletin.cfm?Bulletin_ID=14&SID=

BRIDGES Weekly Trade News Digest© is published by the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD), <http://www.ictsd.org/>. Electronic distribution is carried out by the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP).

Contributors to this issue are Heike Baumuller, David Primack, Mahesh Sugathan and Alex Werth. This edition of **BRIDGES Weekly Trade News Digest** was edited by Hugo Cameron, hcameron@ictsd.ch. Managing Editor is Andrew Crosby. The Director is Ricardo Meléndez-Ortiz, 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: 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.

BRIDGES Weekly Trade News Digest is made possible in 2001 - 2002 through the generous support of the Government of the United Kingdom (DFID). Additional support is provided by ICTSD's core donors: the Governments of Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden; Christian Aid (UK), MISEREOR, NOVIB (NL), Oxfam (UK) and the Swiss Coalition of Development Organisations (Switzerland). The **Weekly** also benefits from support for the **BRIDGES** series of publications including: the Rockefeller Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and Swiss Development Cooperation.

ISSN 1563-003X