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NEW EU FOOD SAFETY LAW DEFINES PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE

A new European regulation that entered into force on 21 February for the first time defines the controversial precautionary principle in EU food legislation. The directive (178/2002) lays down principles governing food and feed in general, and food and feed safety in particular. To this end, Article 7 of the Regulation states that in cases where the possibility of harmful effects on health have been identified "but scientific uncertainty persists, risk management measures...may be adopted, pending further scientific information for a more comprehensive risk assessment." The language states that such measures should not be more trade-restrictive than required to meet the desired level of health protection and should be reviewed "within a reasonable period of time".

The WTO Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standards (SPS) states that in cases where relevant scientific evidence is insufficient, Members may provisionally adopt health-related measures on the basis of available pertinent information. In such circumstances, however, the SPS Agreement obligates Members to undertake a risk assessment within a reasonable period of time (usually taken to mean 15 months).

The EU has long been advocating the use of the precautionary principle in various international fora, including the WTO (via SPS) and the Codex Alimentarius Commission (see BRIDGES Weekly, 1 May 2001, <http://www.ictsd.org/html/weekly/01-05-01/inbrief.htm>). Its stance is based on a Communication released in February 2000 that sets out guidelines for the application of the precautionary principle (available at http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/health_consumer/library/pub/pub07_en.pdf). The US, in contrast, generally opposes explicit references to the principle, which it regards as unscientific and arbitrary, in particular when used by the EU in the context of its ban on US hormone- treated beef and of approvals of genetically modified products for sale in the EU.

The new regulation furthermore enables the European Commission to directly intervene when food or feed is thought to pose a serious risk. "For the first time, the Commission can act on its own initiative," said Commission spokeswoman Beate Gminder. "This goes beyond the legal possibilities of the US FDA (Food and Drug Administration)." According to analysts, the new regulation reflects growing awareness within the EU of the need for coordinated action to ensure adequate safety standards. As part of this development, the new regulation establishes a European Food Safety Authority, which will provide scientific and technical support to EU policy makers and disseminate independent information, as well as a Europe-wide information network to ensure quick dissemination of risk-related information.

"Brussels gains new powers to act in food safety crises," FT, 22 February 2002; ICTSD Internal Files.

GMO UPDATE: EUROPEAN COMMISSION PROPOSAL; US REPORT ON SAFETY TESTING

EC proposal to implement Cartagena Protocol

The European Commission on 22 February released its long-awaited proposal on regulating cross-border movements of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), which aims to implement the provisions of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety into EU legislation.

In particular, the proposal introduces a notification obligation for exports of GMOs intended for deliberate release into the environment. It furthermore includes information obligations at the international level on EU practices, legislation and decisions on GMOs, setting rules for identification of GMOs for exports in line with its latest labelling and traceability proposals (see *BRIDGES Weekly*, 20 February 2001, <http://www.ictsd.org/html/weekly/31-07-01/story5.htm>). Regarding GMO imports, the proposal only covers unintentional transboundary movements of genetically modified products, while referring to existing EU legislation for imports and intra-EU movements. A de facto European moratorium on the approval of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) has been in place since 1998. The Commission is also preparing a proposal for a Council decision on the conclusion of the Protocol aimed at ensuring its ratification by the EU.

The Cartagena Protocol was adopted in January 2000 to ensure "an adequate level of protection in the field of the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology". To date, 11 of the 50 ratifications necessary for the Protocol to enter into force have been submitted.

US report calls for better safety testing of GMOs

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) should improve its review of potential environmental effects of new transgenic plants before approving them for commercial release, according to a USDA-sponsored report by the National Research Council released on 21 February. The report also calls for increased public participation in the review process and for continued ecological monitoring of transgenic plants after their commercialisation. "Public confidence in biotechnology will require that socio-economic impacts are evaluated along with environmental risks and that people representing diverse values have an opportunity to participate in judgments about the impact of the technology," the report concludes. Regarding environmental effects of transgenic plants, the report states that the transgenic process "presents no new categories of risk compared to conventional methods of crop improvement" and that risk assessment should be carried out on a case-by-case basis.

The public interest coalition Genetically Engineered Food Alert welcomed the report as a confirmation that current regulations for transgenic crops were inadequate, and called for a moratorium on new field trials and on deregulation of more crops until more thorough

research and regulations were in place. In contrast, the Biotechnology Industry Organization claimed that the report confirmed the effectiveness of the current "comprehensive regulatory system," adding that National Research Council's recommendations "may be viewed as tweaking a regulatory system that is held as the gold standard around the world."

For further information on the report, see

http://www.nap.edu/catalog/10258.html?onpi_newsdoc022102.

"Responsible management of GMOs: Commission proposes EU implementation of Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety," PRESS RELEASE, 22 February 2002; "Regulation of Transgenic Plants Should Be Reinforced; Field Monitoring for Environmental Effects Is Needed," NRC, 21 February 2002; "BIO Statement on NAS Report on Transgenic Plants," PRESS RELEASE, 21 February 2002; "Stronger reviews of biotech plants needed before getting USDA approval, NAS reports," BIOTECH WATCH, 22 February 2002.

NEWS FROM THE REGIONS: AFRICA

USTR on tour in Africa

Meeting with representatives from the South African Development Community (SADC) as part of his African tour, US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick announced US grants totalling USD 8.7 million to help improve Southern Africa's trading capacity. In particular, the US will provide \$US 3 million over three years to support SADC's regional integration plans and link them to the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), \$US 2.7 million over two years on customs reform and trade facilitation, and \$US 3 million over two years to help local food producers to meet US and EU health standards. In addition, USAID will provide scholarships to one trade official from each SADC member to participate in a WTO training course. While Malawi's Minister for Commerce and Industry Peter Kaleso welcomed US cooperation on social and political development, he stressed that "such initiatives must be tailor made in order to cater for the distinctive nature of the member states of SADC."

Zoellick is also reported to be stepping up efforts to increase support for biotechnology in African nations. According to trade sources, the US is looking for support among developing countries should it decided to challenge the continued EU de facto moratorium on approval of new genetically modified organisms at the WTO (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 7 February 2002; <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/02-02-07/story3.htm>). So far, Zoellick has won the support of Kenya's President Daniel arap Moi as well as South African President Thabo Mbeki. While South Africa is the only African country yet to approve the limited use of GMOs, Zimbabwe, Kenya and Swaziland have also begun to consider their use, with other nations likely to follow.

Tanzania qualifies for AGOA

On 12 February, Tanzania obtained the right to export a range of products, including textiles and clothing, duty-free to the US market under the US Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). In order to qualify, Tanzania had to adhere to a number of strict conditions, including that exported products are verifiably produced in Tanzania, the lifting of barriers to US trade and investment, protecting intellectual property, fighting corruption, and reducing poverty. Tanzania was given a green light on many of these fronts late last year by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund through its qualification for the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, which maintains similar conditionalities.

Under the AGOA, participating countries can export unlimited quantities of clothing made from US fabric, yarn and thread to the US duty-free, and a limited amount of apparel made from fabric produced in the country in question (see BRIDGES Weekly Trade News Digest, Vol. 4, No. 37, 3 October 2000, <http://www.ictsd.org/html/weekly/story5.03-10-00.htm>). Currently, approximately 35 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa qualify for the programme.

In other news, on 11 February, the Government of Canada announced it would forgive all \$US 52.2 million in debts it is owed by Tanzania. The agreement is in accordance with the Canadian Debt Initiative (CDI), which has to date benefited 11 HIPC-qualified countries.

G-8 warn against 'unrealistic expectations' for NEPAD funding

Despite recent high-level support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD; see BRIDGES Weekly, 12 February 2002; <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/02-02-12/story3.htm>), representatives from the Group of Eight (G-8) industrialised countries warned African leaders against "unrealistic expectations" regarding financial aid that the G-8 could provide to the Partnership.

Following a two-day meeting with South African President Thabo Mbeki and the 15-member NEPAD implementation committee, Canadian official Robert Fowler stressed that NEPAD was not primarily about money, but about helping to create the appropriate climate for increased investment. Conditions included, inter alia, a commitment to good governance, effective administration and the fact that African governments will measure each other, he said. The meeting also discussed concerns about the impact of Zimbabwe's political crisis on NEPAD progress. While Britain's junior Foreign Minister for Africa, Valerie Amos, said that Zimbabwe was putting the entire region at risk through its poor economic management and human rights abuses, she did not believe that Zimbabwe should be seen as a litmus test for the plan. Private investors, however, do not always share this confidence, fearing that the political situation could further undermine confidence in the NEPAD Partnership.

The Partnership, which aims to promote sound macro-economic policy and democracy in return for deeper investment commitments, will be presented to the G-8 meeting in Canada in June.

"G8 cannot provide immediate backing for Africa fund," FT, 15 February 2002; "Nepad not just about money - G8," IAFRICA.COM, 15 February 2002; "US trade chief pledges 8.7 mln dollars for southern Africa," AFP, 17 February 2002; "US Official courts African allies for brewing biotech-food fight," WALL STREET JOURNAL, 20 February 2002; "Tanzania qualifies for US-Africa trade pact," AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, 12 February 2002.

UPCOMING SERVICES TALKS TO ADDRESS RANGE OF ISSUES

Convening for this year's first 2-week services block, Members will meet in the Council for Trade in Services (CTS) subsidiary bodies such as the Working Party on GATS Rules (WPGR) and the Working Party for Domestic Regulation (WPDR) during the first week starting 11 March, followed by regular and special sessions of the CTS from 18-22 March. Within the services negotiation process, Members are expected to deal principally with the organisation of future work and the discussion of submitted proposals on both sectoral and horizontal issues. Furthermore, Members are discussing the prospect of extending the 15 March deadline for determining whether or not an emergency safeguard (EMS) should be established.

GATS negotiations

According to the tentative agenda of the 19-22 March special session of the CTS, Members will analyse both previously-tabled and new proposals on assessment and treatment of autonomous liberalisation. In this context, the EC prepared a 22 February proposal (S/CSS/W/133, searchable at http://docsonline.wto.org/gen_search.asp) on how to give "credits" to states that have unilaterally liberalised their services markets beyond the commitments undertaken during the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations. According to the new proposal, a Member seeking to agree on the appropriate credit should inter alia be able to show: (i) the liberalising nature of the specific measure concerned; (ii) the WTO conformity of the measure; (iii) the contribution of the measure to the objectives of the GATS negotiations; (iv) the relevance of the measure to the Member from whom credit is sought; and (v) the binding nature of the liberalisation.

Continuing the services negotiations under GATS Article XIX, Members will address proposals on financial and transport services sectors, followed by discussions on horizontal issues such as increased participation of developing countries (Article IV), exemptions from the most-favoured nation (MFN) principle (Article II), and mode four (movement of natural persons). During the last two days of the second week, Members will deal with those remaining services sectors for which proposals have been submitted.

As indicated by sources, Members will then be given the possibility to "conduct some sort of stocktaking" regarding the negotiations undertaken so far before presenting their views on how the future work should be structured and designed.

Subsidiary bodies

Ahead of the formal meetings from 11-13 March, the Members are meeting this week in the WPDR and the Committee on Specific Commitments (CSC) in an informal mode in order to address issues relating to the organisation of future work of the bodies. Notably, on 1 March Members will hold an informal meeting of the WPGR, with exclusive focus on the question of extending the mid-March deadline for the establishment of an ESM. Sources said that it was clear now that Members would "definitively" miss the 15 March date and would therefore informally discuss the issue whether or not, and if so, until what date the deadline should be shifted. Three main camps have emerged in this area: the first one is advocating a short -- perhaps 1-year -- period; the second bloc calls for an extension until the end of the negotiations (scheduled for 1 January 2005), while the third seeks a middle ground by proposing to set the deadline at the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference, to be held in the second half of 2003 in Mexico. Sources cautioned that Members needed to agree on a prolongation of the deadline in order to maintain their mandate to negotiate on the question of creating an ESM.

Other activities

On 14-15 March, the WTO Secretariat is organising a Symposium on Assessment of Trade in Services that will include recent statistical developments in global services trade presented by the WTO, empirical evidence on services reform, structural change and economic development provided by the World Bank, and an overview of sectoral studies presented by the UN Conference of Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Although termed a 'symposium', the participants of this event are limited to government delegates. The Geneva-based non-governmental group CIEL (Centre for International Environmental Law), which had requested in an open letter that the meeting be open to civil society organisations, is planning to hold a meeting on assessment prior to the WTO event.

Furthermore, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in cooperation with the World Bank, is organising a services experts meeting on 4-5 March addressing the issue of domestic regulation (GATS Article VI). Sources familiar with services negotiation dynamics speculate that the participants -- OECD members plus several selected developing countries -- are trying to move the issue forward as talks at the respective WTO forum, the WPDR, have lost momentum.

ICTSD will report on the WTO services weeks and other services-related events in forthcoming issues of BRIDGES Weekly.

"Services: EU Proposal Would Grant Trade Credits For Unilaterally Opening Services Market," WTO REPORTER, 26 February 2002. ICTSD Internal Files.

WTO GENERAL COUNCIL TO ALLOCATE SMALL ECONOMY CONCERNS TO CTD

On 1 March, the WTO General Council will reconvene from its deferred meeting of 13/15 February to conclude consideration of the organisation's work programme on small economies. Paragraph 35 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration mandates Members to establish a work programme on small economies in order to "frame responses to the trade- related issues identified for the fuller integration of small, vulnerable economies into the multilateral trading system. The General Council shall review the work programme and make recommendations for action to the Fifth Session of the Ministerial Conference."

On 13 February, Members agreed that Deputy Director-General Ablasse Ouedraogo would pursue consultations on this matter in order to reach agreement on a framework for the conduct of the work programme. According to sources, Mr. Ouedraogo has held two rounds of consultations on the matter with interested delegations. Based on proposals submitted by a number of small-economy delegations, General Council Chair Sergio Marchi will submit a document (WT/GC/W/469) for consideration by Members at the 1 March General Council session outlining the procedures for how this work programme could proceed. According to the document, substantive work on the work programme will begin in dedicated sessions of the Committee on Trade and Development (CTD) once Members have taken note of the procedures.

These procedures say that the General Council shall have the work programme on small economies as a standing item on its agenda, and that the Chairperson of the regular CTD shall also be the Chair for the dedicated sessions of the CTD. The document encourages Members to make their own contributions to the CTD, and states that the WTO Secretariat will provide relevant information and analysis in areas such as: (a) the impact of WTO rules on small economies; (b) the constraints faced by small economies in institutional and administrative capacities; and (c) the effects of trade liberalisation on small economies.

BRIDGES Weekly will report further on this meeting in next week's edition.

ICTSD Internal Files.

Dispute Settlement Update

EC-US BEEF-HORMONE

On 20 February, the European Commission announced in a press release (see http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=IP/02/281|0|RAPID&lg=EN&display=) that it would remove the requirement of special testing applied to imports of beef >from the US following a favourable opinion from the EU's Standing Veterinary Committee to a proposal from the Commission. Following the adoption of this decision by the Commission, beef imports from the US and other third countries would be treated on equal terms.

"The latest results of this [special] testing, carried out for hormones in US beef imports, have not identified any positive findings of hormones in fresh beef or offal," the press release reports. As a result, the previously-existing requirement for 20 percent of consignments of meat imported from the US to be tested for the possible presence of hormones will be repealed.

Following the discovery of traces of growth-promoting xenobiotic hormones in meat imported from the US which had been deemed to be hormone-free, the EU responded by putting in place an enhanced system of controls on all imports of fresh bovine meat and offal from the US. In September 2000, the obligatory frequency of checks was reduced from 100 percent to 20 percent, as the US was deemed to have improved its testing procedures.

However, "[i]mport and marketing of beef containing hormones remains prohibited in the EU," the Commission clarified.

Although the EU's ban was found in 1998 to be WTO-inconsistent, US beef containing growth-promoting hormones have been banned for more a decade by the EU, as it considers such hormones potentially harmful for human health. As the EU did not comply with the WTO ruling to lift the ban, the US in 1999 imposed retaliatory trade restrictions on EU imports worth some US\$ 117 million per year.

"Agriculture: Europeans Set To Halt Special Testing Of Hormone-Free Beef Imported From US," WTO REPORTER, 22 February 2002; ICTSD Internal Files.

US-MEXICO TELECOM

In a US-Mexican row on telecom access which could potentially develop into the first General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)-related WTO case, the US on 18 February requested the WTO Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) to establish a panel to address its contention that Mexico had failed to open its cross-border telecommunications market as mandated by the GATS (see WTO document WT/DS204/3, searchable at http://www.wto.org/english/info_e/search_e.htm).

As stated last week by Eduardo Sojo, an economic and political advisor to Mexican President Vicente Fox, the trade panel would not be necessary as Mexico's "willingness to open [its] markets will be clear in the following weeks and months," referring to sectoral reform legislation to be introduced in the Mexican Congress in March or April this year. However, sources indicated that the bill to be dealt with at the Congress only addressed Mexico's domestic telecom market, but not the points challenged in the US request. Otherwise, they stated, Mexico was optimistic that it could win the possible WTO case.

The US alleged in its request that Mexico was in violation of commitments under the GATS Annex on Telecommunications and that it has not: (i) ensured that US carriers can connect their calls to Mexico at reasonable rates, terms and conditions; (ii) ensured that US firms have reasonable and non-discriminatory access to and use of Mexico's telecom network; (iii) provided national treatment to US-owned commercial agencies; and (iv) prevented Mexico's dominant carrier from engaging in anti-competitive practices.

"Mexico's international telecommunications market remains dominated by a single company [Telmex] with a government mandate to set high wholesale prices for calls to Mexico and prevent competitive alternatives," said US Trade Representative (USTR) Robert Zoellick. In August 2000, the US entered into formal consultations with Mexico and subsequently asked the WTO to set up a panel to address the US complaint. However, the US did not further pursue that first request for a panel.

The US' 18 February request will be addressed by Members at the 8 March DSB meeting. Sources expect Mexico to block the first request. A second request cannot be blocked.

"Official Says Mexico, US CAN Avoid WTO Fight Over Telecom Access," INSIDE US TRADE, 22 February 2002; "US Requests WTO Panel To Rule On Mexican Telecom Restrictions," USTR PRESS RELEASE, 19 February 2002.

CANADA-BRAZIL AIRCRAFT

During the last DSB meeting on 19 February, both the US and the EU criticised a WTO panel decision which rejected Canada's attempt to counter Brazil's WTO-incompatible aircraft export subsidy scheme with matching financing to Canadian aircraft manufacturer Bombardier. Deputy US Trade Representative (USTR) Linnet Deily cautioned that the panel report's findings (WT/DS222/R and Corr.1) adopted at the DSB meeting would "invite an increase in market distorting subsidy practices, an outcome which is directly contrary to the entire premise" of WTO subsidy rules.

In the Canada-Brazil aircraft dispute (see BRIDGES Weekly, 31 July 2001, <http://www.ictsd.org/html/weekly/31-07-01/story6.htm>), a WTO panel found in its interim ruling last year that, inter alia, the \$US 1.06 billion in financing provided by Canada to Air Wisconsin Inc. to acquire jets from Canada's Bombardier Inc. were prohibited export subsidies.

The EU and US complaints centred on the panel's interpretation of the so-called 'safe haven' provision in item k, Annex 1 of the WTO Subsidies and Countervailing Measures Agreement (SCM), which states that an export credit scheme is WTO-compatible if it complies with "interest rate provisions" under the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Arrangement on export credits. Canada had argued that the OECD Arrangement -- which is considered an informal 'gentlemen's agreement' -- allowed countries to match the export credits of other trading partners, which are not in conformity with the interest rate provisions, by providing better-than-market-rate financing. However, the panel stated that "the fact that the OECD Arrangement allows matching of derogations, or the fact that Participants view matching of derogations as a means of disciplining export credits, does not necessarily mean that the SCM Agreement should allow matching of derogations" as well.

Canada did not appeal the ruling, thereby obliging itself to revoke the export credits for specific sales within 90 days. Canada's WTO Ambassador Sergio Marchi explained that Canada had chosen this move in order to advance efforts by both countries to finally settle their 6- year trade row on aircraft subsidies.

"US, Canada Criticise WTO Ruling Against Canada's Aircraft subsidies," *INSIDE US TRADE*, 22 January 2002; "Trade: DSB Adopts Ruling In Aircraft Subsidy By Canada," *SUNS*, 19 February 2002; "Transportation: US, EU Hit Out At WTO Panel Ruling On Matching Subsidies In Aircraft Dispute," *WTO REPORTER*, 20 February 2002.

US OFFICIAL HIGHLIGHT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WTO AND FTAA DISPUTE SETTLEMENT

At a 20 February Inter-American Dialogue conference, Deputy US Trade Representative (USTR) Peter Allgeier called for a recognition of the interdependency between the dispute settlement (DS) mechanisms of both the WTO and the forthcoming Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) so as to prevent FTAA members from 'forum-shopping' and to avoid contradictory legal practice. At the WTO, Members are mandated to agree on a clarified and improved WTO Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU) by May 2003 (Doha Declaration paragraph 30), whereas the 34 Western Hemisphere FTAA members were still negotiating the fundamental principles of a DS mechanism for the American trade bloc, Allgeier remarked.

According to Article 5 ("Choice of Forum") of the FTAA draft Chapter on Dispute Settlement, FTAA members will principally be allowed to freely choose the forum in case of disputes falling under the jurisdiction of both the WTO and the FTAA. Once an FTAA member has initiated dispute settlement procedures under the FTAA, however, the member will in general be precluded from changing to another forum (viewable at http://www.ftaa-alca.org/ftaadraft/eng/ngdse_1.asp#f4).

The FTAA Negotiating Group on Dispute Settlement will hold its fifteenth meeting on 25-27 February in Panama City, Panama.

Negotiations to establish the FTAA, similar to the deadline set for completion of the new WTO trade round, are scheduled to be concluded by 1 January 2005. The FTAA will comprise all 34 democratic states of the American continent (excluding Cuba).

"Dispute Settlement: Synergies in WTO/FTAA Talks Involve Dispute Settlement, Other Issues," WTO Reporter, 22 February 2002; ICTSD Internal Files.

In Brief

REPORT TARGETS US EXPORTS OF ELECTRONICS WASTES TO ASIA

A report released on 25 February by two non-governmental groups, Basel Action Network and the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, says that the export of discarded electronics components from the US to less- developed regions in Asia -- namely China and India -- is posing serious health and environmental threats. Titled "Exporting Harm: The Techno Trashing of Asia", the report cites evidence obtained in the town of Guiyu, in southern China's Guangdong province, where electronic waste from computers and printers is disassembled at a number of facilities. However, the report notes that, "a tremendous amount of imported [electronic] waste material and process residues is not recycled but is simply dumped in open fields, along riverbanks, ponds, wetlands, in rivers and in irrigation ditches," the report said. According to the publication, sediment and water samples taken from the area indicate the presence of high levels of heavy metals of the kind found in computers and other electronic components. Between 50 and 80 percent of electronic waste intended for recycling in the western US is shipped to countries such as China, India and Pakistan, where environmental regulations are less stringent. The European Union is currently in the process of implementing legislation that would require electronics manufacturers to adopt cradle-to-grave responsibility for their products, while the US has resisted this regulatory approach. The EU legislation is aimed at phasing out the use of six hazardous, persistent bioaccumulative toxic materials found in common electronics products such as VCRs and computers.

To view the NGO report visit: <http://www.ban.org>.

"Report slams export of 'e-waste' to Asia," REUTERS, 26 February 2002.

PESTICIDES, ASBESTOS RECOMMENDED FOR STRICTER TRADE CONTROLS

Experts at the 3rd session of the Interim Chemical Review Committee (17- 21 February, Geneva) called for three widely-used pesticides and all forms of asbestos to be added to the list of chemicals which require "prior informed consent" (PIC) by the importing country under the 1998 Rotterdam Convention. In this context, the UN Environment

Programme (UNEP) highlighted the broader problem of cheap organophosphates whose use continues -- in particular in developing countries even after they have been banned or restricted in industrialised countries -- despite growing evidence of illness and death. UNEP also stressed that the experts' decision reconfirmed "the right to make trade judgments on the basis of how a pesticide is actually used in the field, rather than on the basis of the manufacturer's instructions". The Committee's recommendations will be forwarded to the next meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee of the Rotterdam Convention on hazardous chemicals and pesticides, currently scheduled for 30 September - 4 October in Bonn, Germany. While the Rotterdam Convention has yet to enter into force with only 18 of the required 50 ratifications submitted, signatory governments have pledged to apply PIC provisions of the Convention on a voluntary basis.

Documents of the meeting are available at <http://www.pic.int/>.

"Three deadly pesticides and asbestos targeted for action," UNEP, 21 February 2002.

US-ARGENTINA COUNCIL MEETS ON TRADE AND INVESTMENT

The US-Argentina Bilateral Council on Trade and Investment convened for its first meeting on 20 February to discuss ways to increase trade and coordinate efforts in multilateral forums. At the meeting, Deputy US Trade Representative Peter Allgeier and Argentine Secretary for Trade, International Economic Relations and Consular Affairs Martin Redrado reiterated their commitment to pursuing trade liberalisation through the WTO, the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) and the "four- plus-one" mechanism involving the US and Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay). The next meeting of the Council is currently scheduled to take place on 17 April in Buenos Aires.

"U.S.-Argentina Bilateral Council on Trade's First Meeting Stresses Biotech, Steel, FTAA," INTERNATIONAL TRADE DAILY, 25 February 2002.

WTO In Brief

WTO STARTS TO SCHEDULE NEGOTIATION TIMETABLE

On 28 February, the first meeting of the WTO Negotiating Group on Rules will convene in an informal open-ended session to set out its meeting schedule and work programme for negotiations. Subject areas to be addressed under this Negotiating Group include trade remedies (notably antidumping), regional trade agreements, and subsidies, including fisheries subsidies.

According to trade sources, other negotiating groups will meet shortly to agree on their own schedules and substantive workplans. However, many developing country delegations have expressed concern over the likelihood that negotiation group meetings will overlap. One trade diplomat said that there should be a central agency to oversee the scheduling of meetings, ensuring that they were spaced out appropriately throughout the year and that there was no overlap with other negotiating meetings.

However, trade sources say that this it could be very difficult, as the agenda for regular bodies has already been set, and would be hard to change because of set practices, such as services and agriculture weeks, which are coordinated to group a number of related meetings together. Deputy Director-General Miguel Rodriguez is putting together an overall list of meetings that attempts to adhere to a 1995 list of meeting schedule principles (see BRIDGES Weekly, 20 February 2002, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/02-02-20/story1.htm>) that would include both negotiation groups and regular bodies. It is expected early next week.

ICTSD will report further on the outcome of the Rules Negotiation Group in next week's issue.

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/cal/index.htm>.

Coming Up This Week: 26 February - 5 March

26-27 February, Brussels, Belgium: UNEP/UNCTAD INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON PROMOTING PRODUCTION AND TRADING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ORGANIC AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS. The workshop will explore opportunities for promoting production and trade in organic agricultural products by developing countries. Focus will be given to examining the role organic agriculture can play to simultaneously meet developmental and environmental objectives, and to identifying ways to enhance market access for developing country exports of organic agriculture products. For further information contact UN Environment Programme Economics and Trade Unit; email: etb@unep.ch; Internet: <http://www.unep.ch/etu>.

27-28 February, Paris, France: OECD ODA AND PRIVATE FINANCE: ATTRACTING FINANCE AND INVESTMENT TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. Organised by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The theme of the

forum is how to better link up development cooperation policies and private finance, both domestic and external. The forum will provide a platform for discussion between donors, developing countries and the private sector on how to shape the implementation of the codes and standards for financial and corporate governance in ways that address the circumstances, needs and capacities of developing countries at different stages of development. For further information contact the OECD, Paris, France; email: daf.contact@oecd.org; Internet: <http://www1.oecd.org/daf/ffd/dc.htm>.

28 February - 2 March, Uttar Pradesh, India: INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TOURISM DEVELOPMENT, COMMUNITY AND CONSERVATION. The conference will examine shaping eco-tourism for the Third Millennium. For further information contact: email: tvsingh@sancharnet.in. From IISD Linkages, <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/journal/>.

3-8 March, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: THIRD AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT FORUM. The forum will focus on five thematic clusters: Economic Policies for Accelerating Regional Integration; Physical Integration through Infrastructure Development; Regional Approaches to Regional Issues; Institutional Arrangements and Capacity; and the Peace and Security Architecture. A wide spectrum of stakeholders will come together to discuss these issues, refine options and seek consensus on the way ahead. ADF III will help define a broad-based inclusive process to harmonise and accelerate integration efforts in the continent and build consensus around the key strategic actions that need to be taken. It will also provide an opportunity to launch a process for the systematic monitoring of regional integration efforts in Africa. For further information contact: ADF III Secretariat; tel: (251-1) 445-227 or 443- 700 or 445-347; fax: 516-513 or 516-563; email: adf@uneca.org; Internet: <http://www.uneca.org/adfiii/adfiii.htm>.

4 March, London, UK: BILATERAL INVESTMENT TREATIES AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION: THE LATIN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE. For further information contact: The British Institute of International and Comparative Law; Charles Clore House, 17 Russell Square, London WC1B 5JP, United Kingdom; tel: (44-0-207) 862-5151; fax: 862-5152; email: info@biicl.org; Internet: <http://www.biicl.org>.

4-5 March, Ottawa, Canada: FIRST JOINT MEETING OF THE HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS OF THE AMERICAS. The meeting will serve as a follow-up to the 2001 First Meeting of the Ministers of the Environment of the Americas. For further information contact: Environment Canada Ottawa, Canada; tel: (1-819) 956-5212; fax: 956-5964; email: enviroinfo@ec.gc.ca; Internet: <http://www.ec.gc.ca/>. From IISD Linkages: <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/journal/>.

5 March London, UK: ASSIGNMENT OF RECEIVABLES IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE: THE NEW UN CONVENTION. £30 members and £50 non-members. For further information contact: The British Institute of International and Comparative Law; Charles Clore House, 17 Russell Square, London WC1B 5JP, United Kingdom; tel: (44-0-207) 862-5151; fax: 862-5152; email: info@biicl.org; Internet: <http://www.biicl.org>.

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. For further information on WTO events contact: WTO Information and Media Relations Division, Geneva; tel: (41-22) 739- 5007; fax: 739-5458; email: enquiries@wto.org.

26 February, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO COMMITTEE ON CUSTOMS VALUATION.

28 February, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO INFORMAL OPEN-ENDED NEGOTIATING GROUP ON RULES.

5-7 March, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO COUNCIL FOR TRADE-RELATED ASPECTS OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS (TRIPS).

6 March, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT - TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PLAN.

8 March, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO DISPUTE SETTLEMENT BODY.

11 March, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO PLEDGING CONFERENCE FOR THE DOHA DEVELOPMENT AGENDA GLOBAL TRUST FUND.

11 March, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO COMMITTEE ON SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS.

12 March, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO WORKING PARTY ON DOMESTIC REGULATION.

13 March, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO COMMITTEE ON MARKET ACCESS.

13 March, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO COUNCIL FOR TRADE IN SERVICES.

Other Forthcoming Events

11-13 March, Geneva, Switzerland: 28TH EXECUTIVE SESSION OF THE UN CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD) TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD. For further information visit the UNCTAD website at <http://www.unctad.org>.

17-19 April, Washington, DC, USA: THE FUTURE OF WEALTH ON EARTH- OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS FOR INVESTORS, CORPORATIONS, AND ACTIVISTS IN A CHANGING GLOBAL CLIMATE. Organised by the Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies (CERES). The conference is a forum for

leaders with widely different backgrounds, assumptions and visions to find concrete solutions to today's environmental, energy security, and related economic concerns. For further information contact: Sarah Raposa, CERES; email: raposa@ceres.org; Internet: <http://www.ceres.org/>.

19-21 September, Ljubljana, Slovenia: EASTERN ENLARGEMENT OF THE EU: IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AND DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY. This is the 10th General Conference, hosted every three years by the European Association of Development Research and Training Institutes (EADI). For further information contact: Susanne von Itter, EADI; tel: (49 22) 8261-8101; fax: 8261-8103; email: itter@eadi.org; Internet: <http://www.eadi.org/generalconference.htm>.

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).

ON-LINE REGIONAL INTEGRATION DISCUSSION LAUNCHED AHEAD OF THE THIRD AFRICA DEVELOPMENT FORUM (3-8 March). The discussion, organised in conjunction with AllAfrica.com and Bellanet, is the latest in a series of Internet-enabled opportunities for dialogue organised by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) around key policy findings and forums, with the aim of broadening participation and providing space for a wider and greater range of African development stakeholder views. Recommendations from the regional integration will feed into the main forum, as well as into ECA's programmatic work. To join the ECA on-line discussion on regional integration, send a blank e-mail to join- adf3@lyris.bellanet.org and you'll receive an automated response explaining next steps. For archives of the discussion, go to <http://www.bellanet.org/adf/2002/>. For further information contact UNECA, P.O. Box 3001 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; tel: (+251-1)-44 50 98 or 44 31 61; fax: 51 03 65; email: ecainfo@uneca.org; Internet: www.uneca.org.

TRADE AND PRODUCTION. By Alessandro Nicita and Marcelo Olarreaga, published by Trade, Development Research Group, November 2001. This paper is a companion to the Trade and Production database, which contains trade, production, and tariff data for 67 industrial and developing countries at the industry level for 1976-99. The database is available on request on CD-ROM in a series of ASCII files and Microsoft Excel worksheets. It is also available on the Web at <http://www.worldbank.org/research/trade>. The authors may be contacted at anicita@worldbank.org or molarreaga@worldbank.org.

THE KYOTO PROTOCOL- ANY BENEFITS FOR THE POOR? By Artur Runge-Metzger, in THE COURIER: the magazine of ACP-EU development cooperation, Nov/Dec 2001. According to the author, the eradication of poverty and reversing climate

change are among the biggest global challenges of the 21st century. In his article, he attempts to explain the connection between the two obstacles. For further information, visit <http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/publicat/courier>.

A CLUB NO MORE - THE WTO AFTER DOHA. By William A. Kerr, in The Estey Centre Journal of International Law and Trade Policy, Winter 2002. This article addresses the contention that since its inception, the GATT, and subsequently the WTO, has been able to operate in a fashion that is more consistent with a club than an inclusive organization that encourages the active participation of all its members. It argues that the WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha in November 2001 appears to have been a watershed in how the organisation functions, and the club model may no longer be appropriate. For the full article, visit www.esteyjournal.com.

Electronic Resources

FISHERIES-INDUCED CHANGES IN MARINE ECOSYSTEMS. Press release, memo, and power point slide presentation compiled by SeaWeb resources. The materials can be viewed at <http://www.seaweb.org/AAAS2002/>. For further information or additional materials, contact Jessica Brown at jbrown@seaweb.org.

COMMISSION ON INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS (CIPR) DOCUMENTS available online at <http://www.iprcommission.org/meetingsIndex.asp>. Documents are comprised of minutes of CIPR meetings, submissions by organisations, reports of visits and fact-finding missions, and other relevant resource material. The full documents and any additional related documents can be downloaded in both Word and PDF format by following the appropriate link. Some of the current documents include: Institutional and Capacity Issues in Developing Countries; Developing Countries and International IP Standard-Setting; Access to Genetic Resources, Gene-based Inventions and Agriculture; Using Innovative Action to Meet Global Health Needs through Existing Intellectual Property Regimes; and The WTO TRIPS Agreement and Its Implications for Access to Medicines in Developing Countries.

UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY (UNU) RESEARCH AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD. A policy brief on Regional and National Approaches in Asia and the Pacific - Inter-linkages, Synergies and Coordination among MEAs is online at http://www.geic.or.jp/jerry/designs/RN_Report.pdf. This is the second in the series of policy briefs on Inter-linkages that will be printed and distributed by the UNU in the coming months, in time for the Johannesburg Summit. The previous report on the inter-linkages between the Ozone and Climate Change Conventions and the Issue Management Approach can also be downloaded at <http://www.geic.or.jp/jerry/designs/web.pdf>.

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

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