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LEAD STORIES

DOHA ROUND: TALKS STALL, NEGOTIATING
GROUPS TO RESUME IN 2004 1
SINGAPORE ISSUES: TALKS MARKED BY
CONFUSION, DISAGREEMENT ON WAY FORWARD 2

OTHER NEWS

SERVICES WEEK SHOWS DYNAMISM DESPITE
STALLED DOHA TALKS 4

IN BRIEF

EUROPEAN FOOD COMMITTEE FAILS TO END DE
FACTO BIOTECH MORATORIUM 5
TASK FORCE FORMED AGAINST ILLEGAL FISHING 5
US-AUSTRALIA, US-MOROCCO FREE TRADE DEALS
POSTPONED 6
WORLD SUMMIT ON INFORMATION SYSTEMS
OPENS IN GENEVA 6
SUSTAINABLE COFFEE INITIATIVE TO ESTABLISH
NEW PARTNERSHIP PLATFORM 6

WTO IN BRIEF

US BACKS OFF ON STEEL TARIFFS 7
LDC COMMITTEE DISCUSSES LACK OF LDC
REQUESTS FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE 7

EVENTS & RESOURCES

EVENTS 7
RESOURCES 9

LEAD STORIES

DOHA ROUND: TALKS STALL, NEGOTIATING GROUPS TO RESUME IN 2004

On 9 December, General Council (GC) Chair Carlos Perez del Castillo (Uruguay) wrapped up a second set of informal talks he has been conducting since the failure of the fifth Ministerial Conference in Cancun in September, concluding that Members would not be able to relaunch talks at a 15 December GC meeting. Instead he told Members attending a Heads of Delegation (HODs) meeting that he would present a Chair's report on 15 December, outlining progress thus far, identifying key issues and setting out a process for advancing the Doha round.

Members have been engaging in informal talks on four key issues -- agriculture, industrial market access, cotton and the 'Singapore' issues of investment, competition, trade facilitation and transparency in government procurement -- in order to reach a framework for restarting trade negotiations launched at Doha in 2001 (see BRIDGES Weekly, 4 December 2003, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/03-12-04/story1.htm>).

Castillo sets out process for moving forward

The HODs meeting, which was attended by representatives of all WTO Members, heard reports by Chair Perez del Castillo and WTO Director-General Supachai Panitchpakdi, lasted only two hours.

Chair Perez del Castillo summed up the status of informal talks so far, and outlined the way ahead (to view the speech, see http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news03_e/stat_gc_chair_9dec03_e.htm). He noted that although Members remained committed to the multilateral trade system and the round, little real negotiation and bridging of positions had taken place. In fact, Members had not found enough convergence to take 'necessary action to conclude the round' as requested by Ministers at

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Cancun. Therefore, he would not issue a new negotiating draft, but would rather submit a Chair's report, on his own responsibility, to the 15 December GC meeting. This report would outline progress made during the informal consultations held since Cancun; identify key issues to be addressed as negotiations resume; and give a sense of possible ways ahead. He briefly outlined discussions and progress in the four key areas Members has been focusing on over the last few months, and also said he would stress the need to address specific development-related issues.

Chair Perez del Castillo suggested that all negotiating bodies, including the Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC) overseeing their work, would be re-activated next year after new chairs were elected. He said he firmly believed that "it is now essential to reactivate all of these bodies in order to ensure the transparency and inclusiveness to which we are all committed," and "added that restarting all the bodies dealing with the different aspects of the Doha agenda will enable us to give full attention to the development perspective".

D-G Supachai Panitchpakdi also addressed delegates, outlining his meetings with Ministers during travels (http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news03_e/stat_gc_dg_9dec03_e.htm). He said he had received confirmation that Ministers remain committed to the current trade round, adding that, "the challenge, as ever, is to translate this general sense of commitment into concrete progress in the negotiations". He concluded by asking Members to engage in the process with a renewed sense of urgency and engagement.

In reactions to the plan for moving ahead, some developed country Members questioned the utility of restarting negotiating groups even though no real progress had been made in talks. Other Members, such as India, were content to return to negotiating groups, as this would ensure a transparent process.

All eyes set on Brasilia

After the 9 December HODs meeting, a number of key Members departed for Brasilia to attend a meeting of the G-20 countries from 11-12 December. WTO Director-General Supachai Panitchpakdi and EC Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy were reportedly also attending. According to Clodoaldo Huguene, undersecretary for economic affairs at the Brazilian foreign ministry, "the meeting here has the objective of reaffirming the interest of G-20 countries and in establishing a basis for advancement of agricultural negotiations".

Final 2003 GC coming up

The 15 December GC meeting will allow Members to react to the report the Chair presents on the state of negotiations. In 2004, GC Chair Perez del Castillo will spend much of the first two months on the selection process for new chairs for the various WTO working groups, after which negotiations can resume. Chair Perez del Castillo has also indicated that Members should address the issue of the overall timetable for the Doha round early next year, as the January 2005 deadline is looking increasingly out of reach. The first GC session is tentatively scheduled for 11-12 February.

ICTSD reporting; "WTO Negotiator Concedes Govts Won't Resume Talks By Dec," REUTERS, 9 December 2003; "G-20 trade group meets in Brasilia as WTO's Doha Round stalls," AP, 10 December 2003.

Corrigendum: Last week's story "WTO: Informal Talks Keep Geneva-Based Delegates Busy" indicated that some countries had recently joined the G-20 coalition. However, only Zimbabwe has formally joined the G-20 coalition. Kenya will be attending the G-20 meeting in Brasilia on a non-committal basis. Barbados and Jamaica have not joined. We sincerely apologise for this mistake.

SINGAPORE ISSUES: TALKS MARKED BY CONFUSION, DISAGREEMENT ON WAY FORWARD

WTO Members have not reached any agreement on how to deal with the controversial Singapore issues -- investment, competition policy, transparency in government procurement and trade facilitation -- despite a series of informal consultations last week. The negotiating environment was, according to one trade delegate, "shrouded in confusion and lack of clarity". Two informal consultations on 4-5 December, focusing on trade facilitation and government procurement, were part of a second round of informal talks on the Singapore issues initiated since the breakdown of Doha round negotiations in September (see BRIDGES Weekly, 4 December 2003, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/03-12-04/story2.htm>).

Confusion with regard to overall approach to the Singapore issues

While discussions on the Singapore issues were set to focus specifically on trade facilitation and government procurement, overarching questions remain to be resolved with regard to the way forward. A large number of developing countries, including Kenya, have indicated their willingness to consider one issue (trade

facilitation) within the Doha round of trade negotiations, with the other issues being dropped from the WTO agenda altogether. Others countries have said they could consider discussing both trade facilitation and government procurement. The EC, Canada, US and Switzerland have voiced their support for a "two plus two" formula proposed by the Chair, which would see negotiations undertaken on trade facilitation and transparency in government procurement, and further clarification on the remaining issues within working groups. Many countries are tying overall progress to movement in other key areas, especially agriculture, though there has been no such movement yet. Some developing countries have also stressed the need for 'explicit consensus' on modalities for the Singapore issues before negotiations can proceed, a point that has been put forward strongly by India and Malaysia.

India sees plurilateralism as 'slippery-slope'

During informal talks, most developing countries came out against the idea of negotiating plurilateral agreements on the Singapore issues. At a 4 December meeting of ambassadors, WTO Members were reportedly surprised when the EC indicated that it would like to see all four Singapore issues retained in the WTO, if necessary through plurilateral negotiations. This, for many Members, represented a shift from the EC's offer towards the end of the Cancun ministerial conference to drop three out of four issues entirely from the WTO agenda. A number of developing countries said the WTO was a forum only for multilateral trade negotiations.

According to trade sources, some Members -- including India -- felt that if the plurilateral approach was accepted for the Singapore issues, it would set a dangerous precedent for other issues such as environment, labour and geographical indications. One trade diplomat remarked that even many developed countries, apart from the EC, were not comfortable with the idea of plurilateral agreements, although they had not said so openly. Australia had remarked earlier that if a plurilateral approach had to be taken, it could be taken outside the WTO, citing the example of steel, for which a plurilateral agreement is being negotiated within the OECD.

One trade diplomat said that, "dropping issues from the single undertaking or from the Doha agenda is not the same as dropping them from the WTO agenda, which is what the EC had offered in Cancun".

Derbez text and others considered in trade facilitation talks

WTO Deputy Director-General Rufus Yerxa, on behalf of General Council (GC) Chair Perez del Castillo, conducted informal talks on trade facilitation among 30 delegations on 4 December. Most developing countries, including Malaysia, Egypt, the Philippines, China, Indonesia and India, were unwilling to engage in technical aspects of the discussion fearing it would pre-empt the status and position of the Singapore issues within the current trade round as a whole. These countries wanted the overall status of the Singapore issues to be clarified before discussing technical aspects. Kenya pointed to national and regional efforts in developing countries to address trade facilitation, and cautioned that multilateral rules could undermine these efforts.

Members also raised questions as to what draft text should serve as the basis for talks. A number of developing countries wanted their submission of 4 September (WT/MIN (03)/W/4, available at <http://docsonline.wto.org>) to serve as a basis, in addition to the 13 September "Derbez text" that came out of Cancun.

Why binding rules on government procurement?

At a 5 December informal consultation on transparency in government procurement, some Members expressed concerns similar to those raised a day earlier related to the overall process. While the meeting was meant to focus on technical aspects of government procurement, a number of Members objected to the Chair using Annex D of the "Derbez text" as the basis for discussions. They said that modalities should not be 'pre-negotiated' so long as many other key issues had not been clarified. Some countries questioned the need for the dispute settlement understanding to apply to a possible agreement on transparency in government procurement, especially if the agreement was to cover only transparency and not market access.

HODs meeting discusses overall process

At an open-ended heads of delegation (HODs) meeting on 9 December, Chair Perez del Castillo said that the process of consultations on the Singapore issues would continue in 2004. Stressing the need to build on work done since Cancun, he said he intended to present a detailed report on the outcome of consultations on the Singapore issues at the 15 December GC meeting. He added that all delegations would be presented with an opportunity to state their positions on the Singapore issues for the record at this meeting. According to one developing country delegate, the Chair in his report

would likely indicate that the 'possibility' of starting work on modalities for trade facilitation and government procurement existed, and would suggest that Members reflect and decide at the level of the GC on how to proceed on investment and competition policy. This, according to the delegate, was to ensure 'strategic space for manoeuvre' both for the Chair and delegations.

ICTSD reporting; "EC's Shift On Singapore Issues Sours WTO Green Room Meeting On Trade Facilitation," TWN INFO SERVICE ON WTO ISSUES, 3 December 2003; "Wrangle Over Singapore Issues," THE STAR, 8 December 2003; "Drop 3 Or At Least 2 Singapore Issues Altogether From The WTO, Say Developing Countries At WTO Meeting," TWN INFO SERVICE ON WTO ISSUES, 4 December 2003.

OTHER NEWS

SERVICES WEEK SHOWS DYNAMISM DESPITE STALLED DOHA TALKS

A few 'sparks' to the otherwise frozen Doha round of trade negotiations appeared during meetings of the WTO Services Council and its subsidiary bodies from 2-5 December. In the request and offer phase of the services negotiations, and in the negotiations on the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) rules and on domestic regulation, some Members took action that injected a small sense of movement into current negotiations. Further, the WTO secretariat presented reports on activities carried out by the Services Council and its subsidiary bodies during 2003.

Services offers increases substantially

While no special (negotiating) session of the Council for Trade in Services was held, requests and offers by developed and developing countries continue to increase. Virtually all WTO Members have received requests issued by some 62 mainly developed and larger developing countries, and 40 or more offers were submitted in 2003. Among the new countries presenting offers were: Bahrain, Bulgaria, Colombia, Chile, Czech Republic, Fiji, Guatemala, Hong Kong, Korea, Macao, China, Paraguay, Peoples Republic of China, Peru, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, St Christopher and Nevis, Thailand and Turkey. One trade source noted that the presentation of offers shows that services is still an area in which many players have an

interest, and is still the most dynamic area of the current Doha round of negotiations.

Working Party on GATS Rules discusses ESM/subsidies

The Working Party on GATS Rules (WPGR) held its last meeting of the year on 2 December. Delegates commented on the Emergency Safeguard Mechanism (ESM) for the services sector and on reaching the deadline for its completion, set for 15 March 2004. Despite ongoing discussions in 2002 and 2003 on the elements for an ESM and its feasibility and desirability, fundamental differences remain among Members. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members are the main demandeurs for an ESM, while some Members, such as the EU, have questioned its feasibility (see Bridges Weekly, 20 March 2003, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/03-03-20/story6.htm>). At the WPGR meeting, Switzerland tabled a non-paper responding to an example of an ESM provided by Thailand and presented an alternate scenario without the ESM. Few comments were made on the paper.

On the 15 March deadline for ESM negotiations, some Members supported the idea of holding a special ESM session in January. The US opposed this initiative, preferring a series of informal consultations on the issue. Members agreed to give the Chair the mandate of holding informal consultations on the ESM until the deadline.

On the subsidies negotiations, Chile provided a paper comprising five examples that highlighted how countries used subsidy programmes, stressing that rules to tackle services subsidies were needed. Many countries backed this paper and requested it to be used as a basis for further discussions. Some delegates, however, pointed out that it should not be considered a substitute for the mandate provided in GATS Article 15, which obligates Members to enter into negotiations to develop multilateral disciplines to avoid trade-distortive effects of services subsidies. The US expressed some reservations over the document, while the EC did not comment on it.

WPDR considers Article VI:4, "necessity tests"

Members also discussed a revised update of a note by the WTO Secretariat on "necessity tests," which refers to the need to make sure that domestic laws and regulations are not more burdensome than necessary from a trade perspective. The WTO Secretariat presented an updated and expanded version of a previous note on "necessity tests" from 1999 (S/WPDR/W/27, shortly available at <http://docsonline.wto.org>). The note includes a

background section on what necessity tests are, and then examines issues related to the necessity test as they have arisen in WTO jurisprudence. WTO Agreements contain a number of provisions commonly referred to as necessity tests. The aim of the necessity test is to establish whether a measure is necessary to achieve certain policy objectives. These policy objectives include issues such as consumer protection, professional competence and quality of services.

According to the note by the WTO Secretariat, Article VI:4 of the GATS does not constitute a direct necessity test on Members. Rather, the Article calls on Members to negotiate any needed disciplines to ensure that measures do not create unnecessary barriers to trade. The disciplines of accountancy would, according to the Agreement, have more legal value since they contain a necessity test in the form of an obligation. The scope of the necessity test in Article VI:4 is basically to measures related to licensing, technical standards and qualifications.

ICTSD reporting.

IN BRIEF

EUROPEAN FOOD COMMITTEE FAILS TO END DE FACTO BIOTECH MORATORIUM

At an 8 December meeting, the European Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health failed to reach the qualified majority required for approving Syngenta's Bt-11 biotech maize (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 14 November 2003, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/03-11-14/story1.htm>). Thirty-three members voted in favour, 29 against the approval and 25 members abstained from voting. Austria, Denmark, France, Greece and Luxembourg voted against the proposal, while Germany, Belgium and Italy abstained. A positive vote would have put an end to the ongoing de facto moratorium on the approval of new genetically modified organisms (at least for biotech foods), currently being challenged in the WTO by the US, Canada and Argentina (see BRIDGES Trade BioRes, 25 August 2003, <http://www.ictsd.org/biores/03-08-25/story2.htm>). The proposal will now be put to the European Council (probably in January), which will be required to take a decision within three months. If it fails to decide, the Commission can adopt the proposal unilaterally. Civil society group Friends of the Earth hailed the vote as a "victory for public safety and common sense". The group continues to insist that the maize should be

assessed under the new, more thorough approval process recently adopted in the EC. The Commission has stressed that the product would not be sold before April 2004 when the new traceability and labelling rules enter into force, which would also apply to the biotech maize.

"EU fails to end moratorium on genetically modified food," ENS, 9 December 2003; "Member states divided over GM food ban," EURACTIV, 8 December 2003.

TASK FORCE FORMED AGAINST ILLEGAL FISHING

A new ministerial task force to combat illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing was announced on 30 November in conjunction with the Deep Sea 2003 conference in New Zealand. Ministers from Australia, Britain, Chile, Namibia and New Zealand will form the task force, which is set to prepare recommendations on sound, politically realistic and financially viable measures to eliminate or prevent such fishing. Scientists, legal experts, and civil society groups will be provided with the opportunity to partake in discussions.

In related news, the FAO recently provided an update of IUU fishing, noting that "the situation is particularly grave and forbidding given that some 75 percent of world fisheries are already being fully exploited, overexploited, or depleted". Meanwhile, the WWF, with TRAFFIC -- a wildlife trade-monitoring network -- released a report entitled "Managing Risk and Uncertainty in Deep-Sea Fisheries: Lessons from Orange Roughy". The report focuses on the rapidly expanding and largely unregulated deep sea fisheries, which are coming under severe threat. The report, which was released to coincide with the Deep Sea 2003 conference, calls for urgent and strong measures to protect deep sea fisheries.

To access the FAO update on IUU fishing, see <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/007/J0403e.htm>.

To access the WWF/TRAFFIC report, see <http://www.traffic.org/OrangeRoughy.pdf>.

"Ministerial task force to tackle illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing," OECD PRESS RELEASE, 30 November 2003; "Hodgson to join international pirate fishing taskforce," THE NEW ZEALAND HEARLD, 1 December 2003; "FAO calls for intensified action to combat illegal fishing," FAO PRESS RELEASE, 3 December 2003; "Unregulated Fishing Threatens Deep Sea Species," ENVIRONMENT NEWS SERVICE, 2 December 2003.

US-AUSTRALIA, US-MOROCCO FREE TRADE DEALS POSTPONED

The US and Australia wound up what had been set to be their final round of talks on a free trade agreement on 8 December, without reaching agreement. The talks are now expected to finish in January next year. A major sticking point in the talks is Australian access to the US agriculture market. Australian Trade Minister Mark Vaile warned Australian farmers that they might have to make concessions with regard to the timeframe for their access, as well as on quotas. He confirmed, however, that access for Australian sugar, beef and dairy still is a top priority in negotiations. The US firmly pushed its own position during the recent talks, including the lifting of certain Australian restrictions in the television, radio and film sectors, and for the reform of the pharmaceutical benefits scheme.

In related news, a report on the potential impacts of the US-Australia FTA -- focusing on the effects of changes to intellectual property laws on drug patents -- was released on 3 December. Entitled "A backdoor to higher medicine prices? Intellectual property and the Australia-US FTA", the report notes that Australians would pay an additional AUS\$1 billion for essential medicines if US proposed changes to the Australian Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme come through. The report states that drug companies would be able to keep the producers of cheaper generic brand medicines out of the market longer if drug patent laws were changed. Prices for "over-the-counter" drugs, products outside of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, might also rise due to the proposed FTA.

To access the report, visit http://www.tai.org.au/WhatsNew_Files/WhatsNew/Patents.pdf.

Delegates at ongoing Morocco-US free trade talks likewise failed to wrap up negotiations as planned -- reportedly due to disagreements in the agriculture sector -- and will resume talks in January.

"US FTA negotiators seek backdoor to higher medicine prices," AUSTRALIA INSTITUTE NEWS RELEASE, 3 December 2003; "Trade talks end but no deal yet," THE AGE, 8 December 2003.

WORLD SUMMIT ON INFORMATION SYSTEMS OPENS IN GENEVA

The World Summit on Information Systems (WSIS), a UN event on Information and Communication Technology (ICT), opened in Geneva on 10 December

and will continue through 12 December. The objective of the WSIS is to provide an opportunity for all relevant stakeholders to develop a better understanding of the ICT revolution and its impact on the international community, and to help develop a vision of an inclusive global information society where all people are empowered to freely create, share, and utilise information and knowledge for their economic, social, cultural and political development. Proposals under discussion, to be adopted by participants in the form of a Declaration and a Plan of Action, include developing national e-strategies for all countries and the launching of a "Global Digital Compact" and an ICT Development Index. A second phase of WSIS will be hosted by the Government of Tunisia from 16 to 18 November 2005.

An Information and Communication Technology for Development Platform (ICT4D), hosting a large number of workshops and side events, is being held as a mirror conference to the government-dominated WSIS. The Platform's core programme centres around: showcasing development programmes and initiatives; debating current experiences and innovative models; and analysing future trends and action on innovative methods such as joint programme financing models and options to further the ICT4D agenda. It is being co-organised by the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

The next issue of BRIDGES Weekly will follow-up on the outcome of the WSIS.

ICTSD reporting.

SUSTAINABLE COFFEE INITIATIVE TO ESTABLISH NEW PARTNERSHIP PLATFORM

On 8-9 December, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) Sustainable Coffee Initiative (SCI) held a meeting on "Sustainability in the Coffee Sector: Exploring Opportunities for International Cooperation - Assessment and Implementation". Participants determined to establish an interim Steering Committee for the creation of a Sustainable Coffee Partnership (SCP) as a platform for global research, policy development and cooperation around sustainable coffee trade. Among others, the Steering Committee would include the International Coffee Organisation (ICO), the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC), the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Bank. The workshop, held in Geneva, attracted some 80 to 90 representatives from coffee grower

associations, the coffee trading and roasting business, Fair Trade and Organic labelling organisations, the funding community, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations. The meeting was a follow-up to a February 2003 SCI multistakeholder brainstorming workshop that had identified key issues. These issues, which were addressed at the meeting, included: financing for sustainability in coffee; sustainable contracts; sustainability standards; and the creation of a Sustainable Coffee Partnership (SCP). Participants brought up questions such as whether grants or credits would be the appropriate financing tool to achieve sustainability in the coffee sector; whether the contractual relationship between producer and buyer could be a means through which sustainability could be promoted, and how harmonisation of, mutual recognition amongst, and cooperation between the many different standard systems could be a big step towards sustainability. They also considered and how a SCP could be established, and what its priorities should be.

ICTSD reporting.

WTO IN BRIEF

US BACKS OFF ON STEEL TARIFFS

US President Bush announced on Thursday, 4 December, that he would scrap steel tariffs to obey a WTO ruling handed down earlier on this month. His move prevented a possible "trade war" with the EU, China, Japan and other trading partners, who were threatening to impose retaliatory economic sanctions worth over USD 2 billion on US exports within December (see BRIDGES Weekly, 4 December 2003, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/03-12-04/story5.htm>). Although trade tensions have eased, EU spokeswoman Arancha Gonzalez noted that other issues remained to be resolved, pointing to a WTO authorisation for the EU to impose up to USD 4 billion in countermeasures against a US system of tax breaks that benefit US exporters. The EU mentioned last month that it was prepared to apply a five percent tariff on US goods starting 1 March next year, with an increase by one percentage point each month for a year (see BRIDGES Weekly, 13 November 2003, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/03-11-13/story3.htm>).

"US steel retreat allows WTO to smile-- briefly," REUTERS, 5 December 2003; "OECD sees steel subsidy deal after US tariff move," REUTERS, 5 December 2003; "EU Says Sanctions Threat Against

US Exports Still Remains," DOW JONES INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE, 5 December 2003.

LDC COMMITTEE DISCUSSES LACK OF LDC REQUESTS FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The WTO Sub-Committee on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) met on 8 December for its final 2003 meeting to continue considering the implementation of the WTO Work Programme for LDCs. On the topic of market access for LDCs, Iceland and Japan presented their programmes in this regard (WT/COMTD/N/17 and WT/COMTD/N/2/Add.12, available at <http://docsonline.wto.org>). Japan made linkages between the overall WTO market access negotiations and improvements for LDC market access. Some delegates questioned certain emergency suspension provisions of the Japanese General System of Preferences (GSP) scheme. Japan responded that guidelines for their use would be translated to a WTO working language, which would help other Members understand them. On the topic of technical cooperation, Ambassador Iversen of Denmark -- who chairs the Integrated Framework for Trade-Related Technical Assistance to LDCs (IF) -- updated Members on recent developments within the IF, such as its extension to new countries. On WTO training and technical assistance (TA), the secretariat noted that LDCs received priority access. However, some delegates noted that LDCs experience trouble identifying their needs and submitting TA requests, and suggested that the secretariat and the Sub-Committee could play a role in identifying needs and priorities. In 2003, only 33 out of 49 LDCs had submitted TA requests.

The next meeting of the LDCs Sub-Committee is tentatively set for 9 March 2004.

ICTSD reporting.

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>. If you would like to submit an event, please email events@ictsd.ch.

Coming Up: 11-19 December

24 November to 14 December. SUSTRA E-FORUM ON INSTITUTIONS FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN TRADE. This e-forum will be structured in three successive, seven-day sessions focusing on the following questions: How can the emerging interests for Global Public Goods help reconcile the seemingly conflicting objectives of trade versus non-trade issues? How can a renewed methodology for sustainability impact assessments (SIA) help to measure these trade-offs? What reforms in institutional international architecture should help define the principle of global governance and to promote collective common interest and sustainable development? The synthesis of the e-forum debates will be used as the starting point of a book in 2004, edited by SUSTRA (a European network of social science researchers and NGOs working together on the issue of Sustainable Trade). To register, visit <http://www.agro-montpellier.fr/sustra/forum/profile.php?mode=register>.

1-12 December, Milan, Italy: NINTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (COP-9). The conference will continue deliberations from SB-18. For further information, contact: UNFCCC Secretariat, tel: (49 228) 815-1000, fax: 815-1999, email: secretariat@unfccc.int, Internet: <http://www.unfccc.int/>

8-12 December 2003, Montreal, Canada: AD HOC OPEN ENDED INTER SESSIONAL WORKING GROUP ON ARTICLE 8 (J) AND RELATED PROVISIONS OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY. Organised by UNEP. Items on the agenda include a presentation of a composite report on the status and trends regarding the knowledge, and the innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities, relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. For further information contact: the secretariat, tel: +1- 514-288-2220; fax: +1-514- 288-6588; e-mail: secretariat@biodiv.org; Internet: <http://www.biodiv.org/doc/meetings/tk/wg8j-03/official/wg8j-03-01-en.doc>.

9-12 December, Havana, Cuba: INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND SUSTAINABILITY. Organised by the Cuban Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment with the support of UNESCO, this meeting will consider policies and strategies that allow a better interface between science and technology and sustainable development. Other issues related to S&T and their interface with society to be discussed include: ethics and bioethics, interactive museums, science communication, science education,

technology transfer, and innovation. For more information e-mail: lilliam@ceniai.inf.cu.

10-12 December, Geneva, Switzerland: WORLD SUMMIT ON INFORMATION SOCIETY (WSIS) FIRST PHASE. The focus of this conference, entitled Digital Divide, Global Development & Information Society, is on critical issues and considerations in the context of information technological revolution, global transformation, and marginalisation. Inter and intra regional disparities will be examined in terms of information infrastructure and dissemination, knowledge generation and management. The second phase will take place in Tunis, Tunisia in 2005. For more information visit <http://www.itu.int/wsis/>.

11-12 December, Tokyo, Japan: ASEAN-JAPAN COMMEMORATIVE SUMMIT. At this event, which aims to enhance ties and mutual cooperation in economic, financial and monetary issues, Japan is expected to sign ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). For further information visit: <http://www.aseansec.org/ajcs.htm>.

12 December, Geneva, Switzerland: SEMINAR ON WOMEN, GLOBALISATION AND RURAL POVERTY: MAKING THE CONNECTIONS. The seminar, held at the Ecumenical Centre, aims to briefly show the links between economic globalisation and the feminisation of rural poverty. Panellists include P. Sainath, Shahra Razavi (UNRISD), Daniela Perez Gavidia (International Gender and Trade Network) and Aruna Gnanadason (World Council of Churches). The seminar serves as an opening to a photo exhibition entitled "Women and Work in Rural India: Struggles for Life". For further information contact: Athena Peralta, tel: +41 (0) 22 791 6336; email: akp@wcc-coe.org; Internet: <http://www.wcc-coe.org>

WTO Events

An updated list of forthcoming WTO meetings is posted at: http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/meets.pdf. 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, and are open to WTO Members and accredited observers only.

10-11 December, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO WORKING PARTY ON THE ACCESSION OF VIET NAM.

10-12 December, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO TEXTILES MONITORING BODY.

15, 16&18 December, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO GENERAL COUNCIL.

17&19 December, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO TRADE POLICY REVIEW BODY - TURKEY.

18-19 December, Geneva, Switzerland: WTO DISPUTE SETTLEMENT BODY - SPECIAL SESSION.

Other Forthcoming Events

16 January 2004, Geneva, Switzerland: PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR UNCTAD XI - CIVIL SOCIETY HEARING. This meeting will be held at the Palais des Nations. UNCTAD XI will be held from 13-18 June 2003 in Sao Paulo, Brazil and is seen as an opportunity for tackling the most pressing developmental challenges confronting developing countries. For questions, including future meetings and accreditation to the Conference, please contact Amel Haffouz, email: amel.haffouz@unctad.org; Internet: <http://www.unctad.org>

23 February 2004, Geneva, Switzerland: PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR UNCTAD XI - CIVIL SOCIETY HEARING. This meeting will be held at the Palais des Nations. UNCTAD XI will be held from 13-18 June 2003 in Sao Paulo, Brazil and is seen as an opportunity for tackling the most pressing developmental challenges confronting developing countries. For questions, including future meetings and accreditation to the Conference, please contact Amel Haffouz, email: amel.haffouz@unctad.org; Internet: <http://www.unctad.org>

9 May - 26 September 2004, Barcelona, Spain. FORUM BARCELONA 2004. The forum will bring together people from all over the world to debate issues around the themes of sustainable development, cultural diversity and conditions for peace. For 141 days, this will be the place where visitors experience cultures and entertainment from around the world through exhibitions, markets, performances, games and more. For further information, visit <http://www.barcelona2004.org/eng/>.

17-21 November 2004, Geneva, Switzerland: FIRST CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE ROTTERDAM CONVENTION (COP-1): COP-1, preceded by a last meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee in September, is tentatively scheduled for November 2004. For more information contact the Joint Interim Secretariat: Niek van der Graaff, FAO; tel: +39-6- 5705-3441; fax: +39-6-5705-6347; e-mail: Niek.VanderGraaff@fao.org; or Jim Willis, UNEP Chemicals; tel: +41-22-917-8111; fax: +41-22-797-3460; e-mail: chemicals@unep.ch; Internet: <http://www.pic.int>.

RESOURCES

WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2003. By the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). This report has been specially prepared for the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS, Geneva, 10-12 December 2003). This year's report examines the specific issue of measuring access to information and communication technologies (ICTs). ITU has long been involved in analysing access to ICTs. As early as 1984, the Maitland Commission Report, known as "The Missing Link," first drew international attention to the large inequities in telephone access across the world. ITU's 1998 World Telecommunication Development Report -- on "Universal Access" -- updated the "Missing Link" findings in light of technological and regulatory changes affecting the telecommunication industry. For further information see: http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/ict/publications/wtdr_03/index.html

THE WORLD ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SURVEY 2003. By the UN Department of Economics and Social Affairs (December 2003). The report contains the United Nations' annual analysis of current developments in the world economy and emerging policy issues. It contains the Secretariat's forecast of short-term global and regional economic trends, reviews major developments in international trade and discusses the net transfer of financial resources of developing countries. The Survey includes statistical tables, which give standardised data on macroeconomic, international trade and finance. For further information see: <http://www.un.org/esa/analysis/wess/>

DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT IN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAW. By Philippe Cullet (Ashgate Publishing, 2003). This book is a comprehensive study of differential treatment for developing countries in international environmental law. It offers an analysis of the legal dimension of the relationship between developed and developing countries in the environmental field and beyond. It first critically examines the principle of legal equality of states and then explores the conceptual framework behind the notion of differential treatment in international law and its relevance in bringing about substantive equality. The book examines the development of differentiation in international environmental law, considers its application in various environmental treaties and evaluates the legal status of existing differential norms. For further information see: <http://www.ielrc.org>

INTERNATIONAL LAW ON INVESTMENT: THE MINIMUM STANDARD OF TREATMENT (MST). By the Centre for International Environmental Law (August 2003). This is a briefing note analysing the minimum

standard of treatment under international investment law. The note surveys the origins of the concept in international law, its incorporation in investment treaties, and its invocation by investors in the context of disputes with host governments (particularly under the NAFTA). For further information see: http://www.ciel.org/Publications/investment_10Nov03.pdf

MUTUAL MISGIVINGS: CIVIL SOCIETY INCLUSION IN THE AMERICAS. By Yasmine Shamsie (North-South Institute, October 2003). The author analyses the participation of Civil Society Organisations in the hemispheric-wide processes, providing essential background for those seeking to understand the dynamics in and around negotiations and in the streets. The document analyses the why, what, who, and how of government engagement with civil society organisations and raises issues for further debate. For further information see: http://www.nsi-ins.ca/ensi/news_views/news57.html

ACCESS AND BENEFIT-SHARING (ABS): AN INSTRUMENT FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION - PROPOSALS FOR AN INTERNATIONAL ABS REGIME. By Gudrun Henne, Klaus Liebig, Andreas Drews, Thomas Plän (German Development Institute, Bonn). This study has been prepared as a scientific contribution to the "Second Meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Access and Benefit-Sharing," held in Montreal, Canada, from 1- 5 December 2003. The authors take as their common starting point the view that the Contracting Parties of the CBD should use the on-going process to develop and implement an international regime to promote and safeguard the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources with a view to increasing the effectiveness of ABS as an instrument of poverty alleviation. For further information see: http://www.die-gdi.de/die_homepage.nsf/654d7718232dc2a7c1256bda0022626d/7068b149353699a0c1256de90030c95c?OpenDocument

AUSTRIA BIOTECHNOLOGY: STATUS OF BIOTECH REGULATIONS 2003. By the US Department of Agriculture GAIN Report (October 2003). This report finds that Austrian consumers perceive that the US is trying to force them to consume genetically modified (GM) products rather than their own organic products. "Science-based pro-biotech discussions with government regulators provide no change in consumer opinions and thus no change in Austrian laws," the report says. The report concludes that Austrian consumer opinion must change in order for anti-GM laws to be changed. For further information see: <http://www.fas.usda.gov/gainfiles/200310/145986564.pdf>

WTO Resources

TRIPS AND PUBLIC HEALTH: DEDICATED WEBPAGE FOR NOTIFICATIONS. The WTO website now includes a dedicated page for member governments to make known their use (or intention to use) provisions allowing cheaper pharmaceutical products to be traded more easily across borders under compulsory licensing. For the page see http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/trips_e/public_health_e.htm

WTO DISCUSSION PAPER NO. 2: IMPROVING THE AVAILABILITY OF TRADE FINANCE DURING FINANCIAL CRISES. By the WTO (November 2003). This discussion paper explores the reasons behind the failure by private markets and other institutions to meet demand for cross-border and domestic short-term trade finance during financial crises such as the one, which affected emerging economies in the 1990s. To access the report visit: http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/dis02_e.pdf

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Contributors to this issue of **BRIDGES Weekly Trade News Digest**© are Heike Baumuller, Evelyn Kislig, Faisal Siddiqui, Mahesh Sugathan and David Vivas. Editor: Malena Sell, msell@ictsd.ch. Managing Editor: Hugo Cameron, hcameron@ictsd.ch. Director: 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.

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