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LEAD STORIES

WIPO DEVELOPMENT AGENDA MEETING BREAKS DOWN OVER CHAIR'S TEXT

Members of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) have failed to agree on how to proceed with embedding a 'Development Agenda' in the functioning of the global intellectual property body. A draft set of recommendations, prepared by the chair of the WIPO committee mandated with carrying the process forward, upset several developing countries during last week's discussions, and left the membership divided. This means that WIPO's General Assembly, the organisation's top decision-making body, will determine the future of the Development Agenda when it meets in September.

The Provisional Committee on Proposals Related to a WIPO Development Agenda (PCDA) had been mandated to come up with recommendations for the General Assembly, based on the hundred-plus submissions members have made. Members are divided both on the content of these proposals and the process for addressing them, which contributed to the early end to the 26-30 June session.

During the meeting, PCDA Chair Ambassador Rigoberto Gauto Vielman (Paraguay) put forward a controversial draft recommendations text containing a "selection of proposals" on which he deemed consensus possible. However, several developing country delegations rejected the chair's text, arguing that it disproportionately reflected submissions supported by developed countries. They argued that the paper constituted a move to dilute the Development Agenda process.

The Development Agenda negotiations started in September 2004, and have been pushed by the 'friends of development' (FoD)*, a group of fifteen developing countries calling for considerations about the impact of intellectual property on developing economies to be incorporated into every aspect of WIPO's activities (see BRIDGES Weekly, 5 October 2005, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/05-10-05/story2.htm>; and BRIDGES Weekly, 13 April 2005, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/05-04-13/story1.htm>). The

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FoD were among the most vocal critics of Gauto Vielman's draft text.

PCDA got off to uneasy start

In the run-up to last week's PCDA, Gauto Vielman and individual member states proposed various approaches for how to move the Development Agenda proposals forward.

As no consensus could be found on how to proceed, the FoD prepared a summary of their proposals and suggestions on how the PCDA could arrive at concrete recommendations for action (PCDA/2/2, 23 June 2006). Their proposals dealt with issues including the establishment of pro-development rule-making principles; the reaffirmation of WIPO members' commitment to UN objectives and principles (including development-related ones); the adoption of guidelines for the provision of technical assistance; the functioning of the WIPO Secretariat; the promotion of alternative innovation models; the protection of the public domain and access to knowledge; and the incorporation of competition rules in the IP system.

The PCDA proved unable to find a solution for addressing existing proposals. From the outset of the session, the FoD's summary of proposals was opposed by developed 'Group B' countries as well as Central European members, which argued that it added new issues to an already complicated discussion. FoD countered that it was simply a factual summary of existing proposals made in order to facilitate comments by other members.

Chair's text as the center of controversy

After the rejection of the FoD proposal, countries began addressing different proposals. Most countries just indicated those proposals on which they felt some consensus could be found, either at once, or with some clarification or discussion. It was not immediately clear where this process was leading, or what would happen to the proposals that were not mentioned.

The previous PCDA meeting had seen a basic difference on how to address controversial proposals. Developed countries wanted such proposals not to be discussed. Developing countries generally disagreed, arguing that the entire purpose of the exercise was to discuss all of the proposals in an attempt to build consensus on them (see BRIDGES Weekly, 1 March 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/06-03-01/story2.htm>)

On the fourth day of the meeting, Gauto Vielman decided to put forward a text that only included the proposals that enjoyed a high level of consensus. The chair's text organized proposals into the following

categories: a) technical assistance and capacity building; b) norm-setting and flexibilities; c) public policy and public domain, technology transfer; d) information and communication technology, and access to knowledge; and, e) assessment, evaluation and impact studies. Notably, by only including proposals that enjoyed a high level of consensus, the text effectively filtered out the more controversial proposals likely to lead to substantial reform at WIPO, for example, those calling for the organisation's rule-making role to be separated from its technical assistance functions.

Members' reactions to the chair's text were both mixed and heated. Industrialised countries, in which the bulk of the world's intellectual property assets are held, broadly expressed support for it. Switzerland on behalf of Group B, Austria for the European Commission, and Croatia on behalf of Central European countries said that the chair's text could be a good basis for continuing work on the Development Agenda. Switzerland also mentioned that the PCDA had already cost over 1 million Swiss francs without providing results, a remark that most developing countries found unwelcome and inappropriate.

In contrast, FoD leaders Brazil and Argentina described the chair's text as biased and unbalanced. They pointed out that the proposals reflected primarily those which were supported by Group B developed countries, and argued that the text was therefore effectively transforming the Development Agenda into an agenda of developed countries rather than developing ones. They added that the text was an example of precisely the kind of behaviour the proponents of the Development Agenda were trying to move away from with their call for a decision-making process that is not primarily driven by the interests of developed countries. Therefore, they said, it ought not to be the basis for any work in the PCDA.

Negotiators from both Brazil and Argentina indicated that they had explicit instructions from their capitals to not continue the process on the basis of the chair's text. In light of the deadlock in the PCDA, they requested that all of the country proposals related to the Development Agenda be sent directly to the September General Assembly. Fellow FoD member South Africa also indicated its disappointment with the way the process was going, and said that it could not continue discussions on the basis of the chair's proposal. Some Arab and African developing countries, however, felt that Brazil and Argentina were overreacting to the chair's text, and could have been more flexible.

The African Group and the Asian Group did not support the chairman's text and called for exploring different options and continuing the work. Individual comments by India, Iran, and Chile indicated that the lack of

balance in the text was important. They called for a more inclusive process and a better attitude toward different proposals, in particular those from developing countries.

Efforts to broker an agreement proved unsuccessful. In concluding remarks about the collapse of the PCDA, countries continued to differ over the future of Gauto Vielman's text and whether it should be passed, along with members' proposals, to the General Assembly.

In a surprise move, the Kyrgyz Republic, whose ambassador had been co-chairing the meeting, submitted a last-minute proposal (PCDA/2/3, 30 June 2006) that simply reproduced the chair's text word-for-word. Given the lack of time remaining, Gauto Vielman announced that this proposal -- now an official country submission -- could not be further discussed and that it would go, along with the other documents, to the General Assembly.

Some civil society actors felt that the Kyrgyz proposal would deepen the existing divide, and was an example of the need to reform policymaking processes at WIPO to ensure that all countries' concerns are taken into account.

*Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Iran, Kenya, Peru, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Uruguay and Venezuela.

ICTSD reporting; "WIPO Development Agenda Talks End With No Agreement For Now," INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY WATCH, 30 June 2006.

EPAs: WITH EIGHTEEN MONTHS TO GO, UNCERTAINTY REMAINS

The EU and the group of African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) ministers disagreed sharply over a framework for reviewing their economic partnership agreement negotiations at a joint ministerial meeting in Brussels on 28 June.

The Cotonou Agreement -- which currently allows most ACP exports to enter the EU market duty free -- is set to expire at the end of 2007. These non-reciprocal trade preferences are meant to be replaced by the economic partnership agreements (EPAs), which will phase in free trade between the two blocs of countries. The EU is currently negotiating one-on-one with each of the six ACP regions.

The Brussels meeting was mandated to discuss how to approach a formal comprehensive review of EPA preparations and negotiations. According to sources,

parties "didn't agree on anything and sent the issue back to ambassadors in Brussels to resolve."

The apparent obstacle to agreement was the scope of the review. According to one observer, the EU sought an "EPA-light review," focusing on a narrow set of elements. In contrast, the ACP sought a more comprehensive survey of the trade and development dimensions of EPAs.

ACP countries have raised several concerns over the development implications of bilateral agreements with reciprocal market access commitments, such as the possibility of EU products flooding their markets and harming domestic industries. Some LDC officials have expressed concern over the very appropriateness of reciprocity between countries at different levels of development. In addition, ACP members are worried about the costs of adjustment and implementation, as well as the EU's request to include in the EPAs obligations beyond those required by the WTO.

In April, the African Union trade ministers adopted a declaration on EPAs which expresses "profound disappointment" with the stance taken by EU negotiators "insofar as it does not adequately addresses the development concerns that must be the basis of relations with Africa." The declaration urges the EU not to seek commitments in services and intellectual property that go beyond WTO requirements.

At the meeting in Brussels, ACP Chair and Barbados Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Dame Billie Miller objected to the EU's attempts to include issues such as competition policy, government procurement and investment -- all of which were dropped from the Doha Round agenda in the face of developing country opposition. Miller stated that "not all ACP regions have national policies let alone regional policies on these issues ... regions should not be coerced to negotiate these issues unless and until they indicate their readiness to deal with these subjects."

EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson downplayed these concerns, rejecting the characterisation of EPAs as "the EU demanding ever more difficult policy choices from a reluctant and unwilling ACP." "I do not believe this reflects reality," he added.

In addition, Miller complained about the EU's conduct in the talks, such as cancelling meetings at the last minute, after ACP negotiators had reached the venue, as well as cases where "junior European Commission officials were sent to negotiate and because they did not have a full mandate, they could not respond to a number of issues raised by the ACP negotiators."

Another issue is the regional organisation of negotiating groupings. Sources have suggested that ACP countries' overlapping memberships in economic integration areas has weakened their negotiating positions. For example, six of the 14-member Southern African Development Community (SADC) also belong to the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), and decided to negotiate under the latter. In her speech, Miller stressed the need for the ACP countries to remain united, and "not to allow the separation created by the EPA negotiations to divide [them]."

The ACP chair also called for hastening the pace of negotiations, and examining potential alternative arrangements in the event that they do not reach agreement before the deadline.

Mandelson, too, suggested speeding up the negotiations. Arguing that preferential market access has not benefited the ACP economies, he recommended making the EPA concept "a reality" and a "modernised and effective development vehicle" through: carefully-structured liberalisation; removing non-tariff barriers; delivering better services; agreeing the rules and economic governance necessary to make an attractive business environment; and deeper regional integration to build viable markets.

Earlier in the month, ACP-EU Ministers agreed to a financial assistance package totalling over EUR 24 billion for years 2008-2013 for the Cotonou Partnership agreement.

To access the Nairobi Declaration on Economic Partnership Agreements, visit <http://www.africa-union.org/root/AU/Conferences/Past/2006/April/TI/Nairobi%20Declaration%20on%20EPAs.pdf>.

ICTSD reporting; "EPA: Remarks to ACP Ministers," EUROPA, 28 June 2006; Africa 'Profoundly Disappointed' by Europe's anti-development stance in the EPA Negotiations," AFRICAN TRADE AGENDA, THIRD WORLD NETWORK, April 2006; "Southern Africa: SADC-EU Trade Negotiations: the Overlapping Membership Conundrum," THE HERALD (HARARE), 22 June 2006.

MEMBERS REACH CONSENSUS IN PRINCIPLE ON RTA TRANSPARENCY MECHANISM

Although they remain divided on the most central issues in the Doha Round negotiations, WTO Members were able to reach consensus last week on a set of rules for looking at each others' bilateral and regional

trade agreements (RTAs). One trade diplomat said that the transparency procedures would help Members establish a "clearer picture" of the rapidly-growing 'spaghetti bowl' of overlapping RTAs.

The RTA transparency mechanism was approved 'ad referendum' on 29 June, after no delegations lodged objections to the draft decision during the stipulated time period for doing so. However, Members have not yet formally adopted the decision. Sources expect this to happen at the 10 July meeting of the Negotiating Group on Rules.

The draft decision sets out a series of notification requirements for Members that are signatories to RTAs. They will be required to provide the WTO with detailed information on the signing and implementation of deals, covering, for example, the pact's scope, rules of origin requirements and specific tariff concessions. Individual RTA members will have to provide import data for each other as well as the rest of the world.

Notably, the WTO Secretariat would use this information to prepare a "factual presentation" (containing no "value judgements") on each RTA to be made public and circulated to all delegations for questions and comments. RTA parties are already supposed to submit comparable summary documents to the WTO. However, one source said that standardised reports from the Secretariat would be a significant improvement, since these reports have been of vastly varying quality, often lacking basic information.

Members will hold one formal meeting to discuss each notified RTA. Most RTAs will be examined in the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements. However, South-South RTAs such as Mercosur (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela) will be looked at in the Committee for Trade and Development. Unilateral trade preference schemes granted under the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) are not covered by the draft decision.

For years, Members have been debating the relationship between WTO rules and bilateral and regional free trade agreements. GATT Article XXIV specifies that free trade areas must eliminate "duties and other restrictive regulations of commerce... [on] substantially all the trade" among parties to them, and that these duties and regulations "shall not be higher or more restrictive" than those prevailing previously. However, countries have been unable to agree on a definition of what constitutes "substantially all the trade," or on how to establish the WTO-consistency of an RTA. Many trade pacts under negotiation exclude long lists of politically- or otherwise-sensitive products. The new transparency mechanism is not designed to help determine whether or not an RTA is in compliance

with WTO rules. It merely establishes a common set of procedures for examining them.

ICTSD reporting.

IN BRIEF

VENEZUELA BECOMES MEMBER OF MERCOSUR

Venezuela on 4 July officially became a member of South American customs union Mercosur, joining Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Its entry pushes the trade bloc's combined population to over 250 million, with an annual GDP above USD 1 trillion.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez described the move as "historic," and a step on the country's "road to liberation." Mercosur's newest member is the world's fifth-largest producer of oil. Chavez had been eager to find new buyers for Venezuelan oil and natural gas exports in an attempt to reduce its dependency on the US market (see BRIDGES Weekly, 19 October 2005, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/05-10-19/inbrief.htm>). He also views the move to Mercosur as a victory in his efforts to reduce US influence, including free trade agreements, in the region.

Associated Press reports that under the deal, Venezuela is to eliminate tariffs on trade with Argentina and Brazil by 2012. It will immediately accord preferential access to the main exports of Paraguay and Uruguay, progressively culminating in free trade with them by 2013. Caracas will have to adopt Mercosur's common external tariff within four years.

Venezuela used to be part of the Andean Community, but withdrew from the trade bloc in April. Some business groups in the country have complained that the switch to Mercosur will lead to a decline in non-oil exports.

Meanwhile, Paraguayan President Nicanor Duarte Frutos has threatened to pull his country out of Mercosur, according to the Financial Times. Both Paraguay and Uruguay have complained about inadequate access to markets in Brazil and Argentina. They have also expressed interest in exploring bilateral free trade agreements with other countries, notably the US -- this is prohibited under Mercosur rules, since it would interfere with maintaining the customs union's common external tariff.

During a June visit to Uruguay, Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim acknowledged that Mercosur had not given smaller member countries the benefits that they had expected. He called for a new deal, including a common bloc-wide industrial policy, to try to rectify the situation.

"Brazil: 'new deal' for Mercosur junior members," MERCOPRESS, 23 June 2006; "Venezuela signs up to trade group," BBC NEWS, 5 July 2006; "Venezuela Non-Oil Exports to Fall on Chavez's Trade Bloc Moves," FINANCIAL TIMES, 4 July 2006; "Venezuela Non-Oil Exports to Fall on Chavez's Trade Bloc Moves," 4 July 2006; "Venezuela joins South American trade bloc Mercosur," ASSOCIATED PRESS, 5 July 2006.

WTO IN BRIEF

AID FOR TRADE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS STARTING TO TAKE SHAPE

At the 29 May meeting of the WTO's Aid for Trade (A4T) Task Force, WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy presented the findings of his bilateral consultations with various international organisations, financial institutions and WTO Members.

Lamy noted that international organizations and WTO Members are willing to participate in an A4T scheme, so long as new A4T funds are delivered through existing mechanisms. He also insisted that the A4T package should run parallel to the Doha Round talks and go into effect when the negotiations are completed.

Noting that the Task Force should consider the opinions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, Lamy pointed to the September meeting in Singapore where the Bretton Woods institutions will likely discuss their contribution to A4T.

Task Force Chair Ambassador Mia Horn af Rantzen (Sweden) presented a preliminary outline of issues that will be addressed in the draft report that the Task Force will present to WTO Members in July. Members agreed that there seems to be a growing consensus on a general framework for the mechanism, as well as the view that the process should be demand-driven, and that conditionalities should be either inexistent or extremely limited.

Mauritius (on behalf of the Group of African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries), Brazil, Colombia and the EU each submitted a paper on their views on A4T at the meeting.

Canadian Ambassador Don Stephenson reported on the final recommendations of the Integrated Framework Task Force (IFTF), which he chairs. Specifically, it has suggested to Members that the Integrated Framework should remain a least-developed country (LDC)-specific mechanism, but that its governance, implementation, and beneficiary country 'ownership' need to be improved.

A Task Force meeting open to all WTO Members is scheduled for 12 June; another gathering, limited to its 13 Members, is set to take place four days later. Sources report that a first draft of recommendations should be ready by 3 July.

ICTSD reporting.

AID FOR TRADE TASK FORCE WORKING TOWARDS RECOMMENDATIONS

The WTO Aid for Trade (A4T) Task Force is in the process of refining the set of recommendations it is due to make to Members by the end of July. At a meeting on 4 July, the panel's 13 members reacted positively to a revised draft recommendations text that Chair Ambassador Mia Horn af Rantzen had circulated to them on 29 June.

The seven-page document incorporated Task Force members' comments on an earlier version that had been sent to them a few weeks before (see BRIDGES Weekly, 21 June 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/06-06-21/wtoinbrief.htm#1>). Proceeding from the premise that "A4T is about assisting developing countries to benefit from liberalised trade" through enhanced growth and poverty reduction, it outlined a series of potential guidelines and recommendations for upgrading recipient countries' capacity to effectively negotiate and comply with trade agreements, as well their ability to participate in international commerce.

The paper pointed to the need to "establish a border between A4T and other development assistance," so that it can be reliably monitored and measured. Furthermore, it said that its recommendations would be conditional on "substantial increases in additional financial resources for trade-related programmes and projects."

Major A4T-related challenges identified in the text included a general lack of understanding of trade as a developmental tool; problems with identifying countries' trade needs; the need for better data and effective monitoring of country policies and donor activities; and a lack of resources for building infrastructure and productive capacity.

The chair will incorporate Task Force members' comments on the text in time for the panel's next gathering on 13 July. If the redrafted version meets with their approval, it will be sent to the General Council meeting scheduled for 27-28 July.

During the meeting, participants generally suggested that the recommendations for ramped-up A4T spending should go ahead irrespective of progress in the troubled Doha Round talks. However, one senior trade diplomat told Bridges that approved recommendations are probably unlikely before the outcome of the round becomes clearer.

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.

Upcoming Events: 6 -12 June

6-7 July, London, UK: IMPLEMENTATION, SCALING UP AND SUSTAINABILITY. Organised by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the conference will explore issues surrounding the implementation of evidence-based policy research, with a focus on the challenges of effective scaling-up and sustaining of projects. The conference format aims to foster discussion among senior policymakers, funders of research programmes, and the wider education community concerned with evidence-based research issues. For further information, contact James O'Toole, tel: (+44 20) 7911 5577; fax: (+44 20) 7911 5579; email: j.o'toole@ioe.ac.uk; internet: <http://www.tlrp.org/conference/oecd/index.html>.

7-13 July, Lima, Peru: 22nd MEETING OF THE CITES ANIMALS COMMITTEE. This meeting will include regional reports and conservation and trade in great apes, along with reviews of significant trade in threatened species between members of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). For further information, contact Dr Thomas Althaus, tel: (+41 31) 323 85 08; fax: 323 5686; email: thomas.althaus@bvet.admin.ch.

10-14 July, Montreal, Canada: 49th MEETING OF THE MONTREAL PROTOCOL FUND'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. The meeting will be attended by representatives from Executive Committee members Brazil, Burundi, Guinea, India, Mexico, Syrian Arab Republic and Zambia (Article 5 countries); and Australia, Belgium Czech Republic, Italy, Japan, Sweden and the US (non-Article 5 countries). For further information contact the Secretariat, tel: +1 (514) 282-1122; fax: +1 (514) 282-0068; email: secretariat@unmfs.org; internet: <http://www.multilateralfund.org/news/1149285657644.htm>

11-12 July, San Salvador, El Salvador: ANNUAL LATIN AMERICAN COMPETITION FORUM. Supported by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB). The agenda of the fourth annual meeting will include discussions on the relationships between competition authorities and sectoral regulators in Latin America; competition policy and the financial sector in Latin America; using competition to lower the costs of remittances; and a peer review of Argentina. The Forum promotes dialogue, consensus building and networking between competition policymakers and law enforcers, and the identification and dissemination of best practices in competition law and policy in a collegial setting. Emphasis is on sharing experience. Participants are senior officials of Latin American competition institutions. Competition experts from industrialised countries and international organisations are included to provide additional perspectives and experience. For further information, please visit http://www.oecd.org/document/7/0,2340,en_2649_201185_31586695_1_1_1_1,00.html.

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.

6-7 July: COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT

7 July: WORKING PARTY ON THE ACCESSION OF YEMEN

7 July: COMMITTEE OF PARTICIPANTS ON THE EXPANSION OF TRADE IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PRODUCTS

10 July: NEGOTIATING GROUP ON RULES -- REGIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS

12 July: SUB-COMMITTEE ON LEAST-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Other Upcoming Events

19-20 September, Singapore, Singapore: 2006 ANNUAL MEETINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND AND THE WORLD BANK GROUP. For further information, contact Clara Goh, tel: (+65 63) 32-7343; fax: (+65 63) 37 4134; email: clara_goh@mof.gov.sg; internet: <http://app.singapore2006.org/index.asp>

RESOURCES

EU NEGOTIATING ROOM IN DOMESTIC SUPPORT AFTER THE 2003 CAP REFORM AND ENLARGEMENT. By Geraldine Kutas. Institute for International Trade Negotiations (ICONE) and Sciences Po Groupe d'Economie Mondiale, May 2006. This paper aims to estimate the level of trade-distorting domestic farm subsidies in the EU through the common agriculture policy (CAP) reform until 2013, and to assess Brussels' room for negotiation in the ongoing Doha Round talks. It finds that 'amber box' support will fall from EUR 43.8 billion in 2000-01 for the 15 then-members of the EU to EUR 22.6 billion for the enlarged 25-member union by 2013. 'Blue box' notifications will fall from EUR 22.2 billion to EUR 4.5 billion over the same period. The findings suggest that the EU could accept a cap on the blue box at 2 percent of the value of agricultural production, substantially beyond the 5 percent that it has currently proposed, and that it could lower its ceiling for overall trade-distorting support by 77 percent, compared to the 70 percent currently on offer. In sum, the study concludes that the EU still has manoeuvring room to offer deeper cuts within the CAP

reform package, and adds that the European Commission should use pressure arising from the WTO negotiations to push for additional reforms to farm policy. Available online at http://gem.sciences-po.fr/content/publications/pdf/kutas_domestic_support1_20606.pdf.

CRUNCH TIME IN GENEVA: PRESSURE TACTICS IN THE GATS NEGOTIATIONS. By Scott Sinclair. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, June 2006. This new paper analyses benchmarks, the plurilateral request-offer process, and proposed new General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) rules restricting domestic regulation of services. At the December 2005 Hong Kong ministerial meeting, developed countries forced through a controversial set of services demands that prepared the ground for a final push to expand the GATS. If there is a breakthrough on agriculture, the pressure will rapidly intensify for a substantial package of GATS commitments. Even if a WTO deal can not be concluded by year-end, GATS negotiators are now making key decisions, including writing the text of new GATS rules restricting domestic regulation which, the paper argues, would seriously curtail the right to regulate services and weaken governments' ability to protect the public. The publication can be downloaded at <http://www.policyalternatives.ca/Reports/2006/06/CrunchTimeGeneva/index.cfm?pa=6104ea04>.

THE VIEW FROM THE SUMMIT: GLENEAGLES G8 ONE YEAR ON. Oxfam International, June 2006. This briefing note reviews the progress in the areas of debt, aid, conflict, trade, and climate change, one year after the 2005 G8 Summit at Gleneagles. On trade it suggests that there has been progress in ending export subsidies on farm products, but overall it notes that proposals currently on the WTO negotiating table, far from promoting developing countries' ability to tackle poverty through trade, are more likely to hinder their development. On climate change it highlights that the G8 took steps to raise public awareness and commitment, but as global energy tensions rise there is a danger that the world's fragile consensus will break down and be replaced by a more nationalistic and competitive pursuit of security of supply, in which the poorest countries will be marginalised. To access this briefing visit http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/issues/debt_aid/downloads/g8_gleneagles_oneyear.pdf.

Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD), <http://www.ictsd.org/>.

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