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LEAD STORIES

CAIRNS GROUP UNABLE TO BREAK DOHA DEADLOCK, CALLS FOR RESUMPTION OF TALKS

Ministers and senior officials from the Cairns Group of farm exporters called on WTO Members to restart the frozen Doha Round trade talks no later than November, during a recent summit in Australia. However, they were unable to broker any new compromises to break the logjam, in spite of the presence of top representatives from the US, the EU and Japan. At the 20-22 September meeting, the 18-member group unveiled a programme of analytical work and lobbying aimed at getting the talks back on track.

The Doha Round negotiations have been suspended since late July, when ministers from key trading nations failed to reach a deal on tariff and subsidy cuts, primarily due to differences on farm trade (see BRIDGES Weekly, 26 July 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/06-07-26/story1.htm>). At the time, WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy said that countries would have to offer new concessions in order for the talks to resume.

"Five for five" compromise not acceptable to US, EU

Brussels has blamed Washington for offering insufficient cuts to its farm subsidies. The US counters that it would have done so if the EU had agreed to deeper reductions to its agricultural tariffs. At the meeting in Cairns, neither accepted a "five and five" compromise mooted by Australia. According to this, the EU would have slashed its farm tariffs by 5 percent more than the roughly 50 percent reduction it has informally proposed, while the US would have capped farm subsidies at a level USD 5 billion below its current offer of about USD 22.7 billion.

The US was singled out by several WTO Members, including Brazil and India, for failing to offer any new subsidy reductions in July. Nevertheless, US Trade Representative Susan Schwab insisted in Cairns that Washington's proposal was "negotiable," and that the

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US was "prepared to do more in terms of cutting domestic support than we have on the table if and when there is significantly more market access on the table in agriculture."

In a communiqué released at the end of the summit, the Cairns Group ministers warned that "the round cannot be allowed to drift. Further delay adds to the risk that we lose the gains secured to date in the negotiations and the continued momentum for trade reform." They urged WTO Members to "take the necessary steps to resume negotiations no later than November." WTO chief Lamy made similar points in his address to the meeting, stressing that sufficient political will could bridge the negotiating gaps. This would, however, require governments to face down domestic opposition.

The ministers attributed the lack of agreement on agriculture 'modalities' -- formulae and figures for tariff and subsidy cuts, as well as exceptions to them -- to substantial differences on both domestic support and market access. They called for "deep policy reforms" to both, saying "the plain negotiating reality should also be clear: modest reforms in these areas will simply be insufficient to conclude a deal on agriculture or to unlock the benefits of the broader Doha agenda."

They urged the EU, the US, and the G-10 in particular to make "the necessary improvements to their offers on market access and domestic support, to establish the basis for the early resumption of negotiations."

The Cairns Group also adopted a work programme instructing their trade negotiators to work with other WTO Members to push for substantial increases in market access, and to participate in technical work on domestic support and export competition in preparation for the resumption of negotiations.

The work programme will also involve analytical and advocacy work aimed at influencing agricultural policy reforms in the US, the EU, and other major subsidisers.

Cairns Group to seek compromise on special products

The ministers also addressed the issue of market access flexibilities for developing countries.

Cairns Group members are on different sides of this highly contentious debate in the Doha Round negotiations. For instance, Indonesia and the Philippines are part of the G-33 group of developing countries, which wants to be able to shield at least 20 percent of farm products from the bulk of tariff cuts by designating them as 'special' for food security, livelihood security, and rural development reasons. Other developing countries such as Malaysia and

Thailand, however, want Members' ability to designate such products to be much more restricted, fearing diminished export prospects. All four countries are part of the pivotal G-20 bloc.

The work programme adopted in Cairns instructs trade officials from the group to "contribute to building convergence" on the issue of special products, as well as on the 'special safeguard mechanism' which developing countries will be able to use to protect farmers from import surges. They have also been asked to address the issue of how to liberalise trade in tropical products, an issue that has divided developing countries that receive trade preferences for such commodities and those that do not.

The G-33's demands are even less palatable to Washington (not part of the Cairns Group). US officials have described them as a 'black box' that render it impossible to assess the true value of market access offers, and blamed the group's proposals in part for their inability to come forward with deeper subsidy cuts in July.

Promises of flexibility -- if other countries move first -- are nothing new in the deadlocked Doha Round negotiations. Nevertheless, Bruno Julien, the EU's ambassador to Australia, told the Weekend Australian newspaper during the summit in Cairns that the US appeared to have made a "further offer" on farm subsidies, albeit one without specifics. He said that EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson would press his US counterparts for further details when in Washington from 27-28 September.

The Cairns Group ministers' communiqué is available at http://www.cairnsgroup.org/meetings/20anniversary_communique.html.

ICTSD reporting; "Cairns group nations call for WTO talks to resume," REUTERS, 22 September 2006; "Latin American officials urge US, Europe to revive world trade talks," INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE, 22 September 2006; "Europe to review US offer on farm deal," THE AUSTRALIAN, 23 September 2006; "Talks fail to crack world trade impasse," THE AGE, 22 September 2006; "US Still Flexible on Agriculture Trade Proposal, Official Says," WASHINGTON FILE, 22 September 2006; "US, EU alone can't make deal for WTO-UGSTR Schwab," REUTERS, 26 September 2006.

OTHER STORIES

TED TURNER PROMOTES BIOFUELS AT WTO FORUM; URGES GOVTS TO 'FIGHT ONE MORE ROUND' FOR DOHA

Ted Turner, the US media mogul turned philanthropist, delivered a ringing call for the resurrection of the frozen Doha Round trade talks at the WTO's public forum in Geneva on 25 September. He told an audience of trade officials, civil society organisation representatives, academics, and members of the private sector that boosting support to biofuels offered a way out of the deadlock over farm subsidies -- and would also reduce poverty and environmental degradation.

The WTO's annual public forum plays host to a series of discussions and seminars on a wide range of issues related to the multilateral trading system, organised primarily by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), private sector groups, intergovernmental institutions, and the WTO itself. The 1000-odd participants at this year's two-day conference focused on the theme "What WTO for the 21st century?"

Turner, who founded the international television network CNN, addressed the opening session in his capacity as chair of the UN Foundation, which he founded in 1998 and endowed with USD 1 billion to support the UN and its causes. Saying that it would be a "disaster" if governments gave up on multilateral trade talks, he called on countries to think about long-term gains for the global economy, rather than short-term pain, in order to muster up the will to revive the Doha Round talks and bring them to a successful conclusion.

"If we give up on Doha, we're giving up on fighting poverty," Turner said. He asked governments not to give up on the negotiations, and, using a boxing metaphor, to "fight one more round -- this Doha Round."

Turner moots biofuels as way out of subsidy conundrum

Blaming rich countries' need for farm subsidies on excess production, Turner said that biofuels -- fuels made from agricultural products -- offered the promise of vastly increased worldwide demand for agricultural products. This, in turn, he argued, would give "developed countries a chance to end the stalemate over agriculture subsidies by giving farmers incentives to grow biofuels."

Instead of having to commit electoral suicide by cutting subsidies to farmers, rich country politicians could simply pay them to grow crops that could be converted into fuels. If WTO governments adopt policies to encourage the production and use of biofuels, Turner added, the demand for biofuel crops would rise so high that subsidies to support them "will not displace foreign competitors or prices paid abroad."

Turner pointed to Brazil, which has saved USD 50 billion in oil imports by using ethanol made from sugar, as well as other examples of crops such as palm, soy, rapeseed, and jatropha which have been used to make biofuels. "Forty percent of the energy for the Bolivian town of Riberalta comes from a plant powered by Brazil nut shells," he said.

He emphasised that biofuels were renewable, could "dramatically cut greenhouse gas emissions," and could help poor countries generate jobs, reduce poverty, and diminish their reliance on expensive imported oil.

Turner proposed that "developed countries should agree to phase out tariffs and reduce their subsidies for food and fibre crops and replace them with support for biofuels" over a 5-10 year transition period.

Others sound note of caution

Others, however, cautioned that even though biofuels have great potential, expectations for them should be kept realistic

Unilever Chair Antony Burgmans, who addressed the session following Turner's speech, warned that a growing world population's demand for both biofuels and food would put extraordinary pressure on land and biodiversity, raising the spectre of deforestation in rainforests in Brazil and Borneo. He urged the audience to be wary of 'low-intensity' biofuels such as rapeseed oil that require several chemical inputs and have relatively low energy yields, although newer biofuels offered far greater possibilities. Burgmans added that wider use of existing technology for conventional fuel efficiency could yield vast savings in greenhouse gases.

Ronald Steenblik, director of research for the Geneva-based Global Subsidies Initiative, also cautioned against viewing biofuels as a "magic bullet," for the trade talks as well as for poverty and the environment. In an interview, he noted that the deadlocked agriculture negotiations dealt with much more than biofuel crops, and that some of the most politically contentious subsidies -- to rice, cotton, and dairy -- went to crops that were not even used to produce biofuels. He also questioned Turner's apparent assumption that biofuel crops would be produced (often

with the help of subsidies) and consumed domestically, rather than freely produced and traded. "Orienting subsidies towards biofuels ignores that biofuels themselves can be traded," he said, adding that there was little evidence that higher prices would obviate the need for subsidies.

Furthermore, Steenblik said, increased global demand for crops would inevitably affect land and water use. Enormous price increases for agricultural products would likely have a negative impact on net food-importing developing countries. Policymakers should keep specific local conditions in mind when discussing cost-effective ways of replacing greenhouse gas emissions, he emphasised. "There seems to be a political correctness about biofuels, so that they can't be questioned."

Certain opportunities did exist for addressing biofuels within the current framework of the Doha Round talks, Steenblik said. For instance, biodiesel had been proposed for expedited tariff cuts as an 'environmental good.' However, he observed, tariffs on biodiesel were already quite low. Ethanol, on the other hand, is still subject to high tariffs in many countries, including a 54 cent per gallon tariff in the US -- but is currently covered by the WTO Agreement on Agriculture and thus not eligible for the environmental goods negotiations. He noted that countries could nevertheless decide to create a new exception for ethanol, or simply decide to unilaterally liberalise trade in it.

Some trade experts proposed making subsidies to biofuel crops eligible for the 'green box' in the agriculture negotiations, which would make them exempt from cuts to payments that clearly distort production and trade. At a UN Foundation-sponsored event on energy at last year's WTO public forum, Ira Shapiro, a former legal counsel to the Office of the US Trade Representative, also suggested reforming multilateral subsidy disciplines to explicitly protect governments' ability to encourage the development of alternative energy sources.

ICTSD reporting.

IN BRIEF

WIPO GENERAL ASSEMBLY UNDERWAY

The 33rd annual General Assembly (GA) of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) opened on 25 September. WIPO's senior decision-making body faces a sizable agenda for its week-long session, which will run until 3 October. It is set to tackle controversial issues including ongoing negotiations on a

'development agenda' for the organisation; a proposed treaty on broadcasters' rights; discussions on patent law harmonisation; and work on generic resources, traditional knowledge and folklore. Divisions among member states have left some of these processes at an absolute standstill.

The 'development agenda' negotiations spring from a September 2004 proposal from the 'Friends of Development,' a 14-member group of developing countries, calling for wide-ranging changes to integrate UN developmental objectives into every aspect of WIPO's mandate and functioning. Talks on the numerous proposals on the 'development agenda' broke down amidst bitter divisions during the June meeting of the WIPO committee that had been examining them (see BRIDGES Weekly, 5 July 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/06-07-05/story1.htm>). The General Assembly must decide on how to proceed with the development agenda. Negotiations thus far suggest that member states are interested in continuing the discussions, albeit for a limited time period such as one or two years.

Discussions on a proposed treaty for the protection of the rights of broadcasting organisations remain suspended, with no consensus on whether a 'diplomatic conference' should be convened to finalise and adopt an agreement (see BRIDGES Weekly, 20 September 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/06-09-20/story2.htm>). With countries divided the General Assembly has proposed that the chair of the committee dealing with the issue hold informal consultations aimed at getting countries to move forward in a common direction.

Negotiations on a proposed Substantive Patent Law Treaty (SPLT), which would determine whether countries should harmonise their distinct national patent systems, have been adrift since April. Sources report that the US has suggested postponing talks on the SPLT until next year. The General Assembly is expected to address a report by an intergovernmental committee on genetic resources, traditional knowledge and folklore (IGC) later in the week.

ICTSD reporting.

CHILE REJOINS ANDEAN COMMUNITY AFTER 30-YEAR ABSENCE

Three decades after it pulled out of the regional cooperation organisation, Chile rejoined the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) as an associate member on 20 September. During the UN General Assembly meeting in New York, Andean foreign ministers from Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, and Peru agreed unanimously on Chile's membership. Under the

agreement, a joint commission will be set up before the end of the year to define the scope of Chile's association. Chile may also be invited to attend CAN meetings.

"I believe that this will give the Andean Community a fundamental boost. Now we must begin working towards a free-trade pact with the EU which will give us several options for free commerce and not just one," said Peruvian President Alan Garcia.

Chile has already signed bilateral 'economic complementarity agreements' with Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru opening the door to free circulation of goods and services, as well as other forms of cooperation. Such accords are a prerequisite for associate membership in CAN. Chile is also in the process of negotiating broader trade agreements with Peru and Colombia.

Chile already has more than fifty free trade deals, including one with China. Chilean President Michelle Bachelet has suggested the agreement with China would now strengthen South America's ties with the dynamic Asia-Pacific region. "The Asia-Pacific zone is probably the most dynamic economy today... Countries that look towards Asia can make individual treaties, but we can also collectively unite and offer a greater strengthened market," she added.

The agreement reportedly raised concern in Mercosur countries -- Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Venezuela -- that it would contribute to a Pacific-Atlantic divide on the continent, rather than increased regional integration.

CAN faced a setback earlier this year when Venezuela withdrew in order to join Mercosur. Chile is also an associate member of Mercosur.

The agreement is expected to increase trade between CAN and Chile, which reportedly grew by 38 percent during the first six months of this year.

ICTSD reporting: "Garcia: Chile's return to Andean Community is a fundamental boost," LIVINGINPERU, 21 September 2006; "Colombia to Sign Free Trade Deal with Chile", SANTIAGO TIMES, 22 September 2006; "Andean Community Accepts Chile's Return to Bloc," BLOOMBERG, 20 September 2006; "Chile Becomes Full Member of the Andean Community," SANTIAGO TIMES, 22 September 2006; "Andean Foreign and Trade Ministers Approve Chile's entry into the CAN as an Associate Member," ANDEAN COMMUNITY PRESS RELEASE, 20 September 2006.

BUSH SIGNS US-OMAN FTA INTO LAW

US President George W. Bush signed the US-Oman Free Trade Agreement (FTA) into law on 26 September. US Trade Representative Susan Schwab commended the bill as holding "promise for the people of Oman and the United States."

The Bush Administration had been pushing for the deal, citing Oman's long history as a strategic ally, as part of its broader goal of establishing a 'Middle East Free Trade Area' by 2013. The US already has FTAs with Israel, Jordan, Morocco, and Bahrain.

The Oman FTA immediately eliminates all duties on industrial and consumer products sold between the two countries, with a further provision that Oman will remove duties on 87 percent of US Agriculture imports and eliminate all tariffs within 10 years. Annual bilateral trade in 2005 was less than USD 1.2 billion. The accord also includes comprehensive protections for foreign investors.

US opposition to the accord came primarily from Democrats, who believe that it does not do enough to protect labour rights and the environment. Oman has previously been cited by the US State Department for abuses of foreign workers, who comprise 30 percent of the Omani population, as well as human trafficking. Opponents also cite the National Labor Committee's study on Jordan following the implementation of the US FTA with that country in 2001. It documented cases in which foreign factory workers had their passports seized and pay denied, or were physically abused and deported, among other kinds of mistreatment.

In a royal decree issued on 9 July, Oman responded to these concerns, reforming its labor laws with special attention to union rights.

Nevertheless, many Democrats remained unconvinced, particularly as the Bush Administration refused to modify the bill to include new wording, passed unanimously by a key Senate committee, which would have denied FTA privileges to any goods produced in Oman through illegal labour practices. Republicans counter that the FTA contains appropriate measures for dealing with labour rights, a result of which additional provisions are unnecessary.

"Bush signs U.S.-Oman free trade agreement into law," PEOPLE'S DAILY ONLINE, 27 September 2006; "H.R. 5684 -- The United States-Oman Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act," U.S. SENATE REPUBLICAN POLICY COMMITTEE, 18 September 2006; "Free Trade Agreement with Oman Gains Final

Passage by Senate," WASHINGTON FILE, 19 September 2006.

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: 27 September - 3 October

27-28 September, Yaoundé, Cameroon: OECD REGIONAL FORUM: MAXIMISING THE DEVELOPMENTAL BENEFITS OF TRADE FACILITATION. Organised by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The purpose of the event is to exchange lessons learned from practical national and regional experiences with trade facilitation reforms and donor assistance in support of them; to foster a national and regional dialogue around core policy and operational issues related to the WTO negotiations; and to discuss completed and ongoing OECD trade facilitation work with non-members. For further information contact, Caroline Lesser, tel: +33 1 45 24 90 46; fax: +33 1 44 30 62 31; email: caroline.lesser@oecd.org; internet: http://www.oecd.org/document/0/0,2340,en_2649_201185_37212928_1_1_1_1,00.html.

27-28 September, Washington DC: INCREASING THE PACE OF TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION AND APPLICATION: ENABLING CLIMATE CHANGE SOLUTIONS. Organised by the International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association (IPIECA), this workshop will bring together experts from academia, business, governments, policymakers and international and non-governmental organisations to improve understanding of how to increase the pace of technology innovation and application. It will focus on: energy outlooks and the pace of technological progress; technology portfolio strategies to increase the pace of innovation and application; opportunities and barriers to technology innovation and diffusion; innovation and technology options for efficiency, transport, methane, carbon dioxide (CO₂) capture and geologic storage and energy supply. For further information contact Luke Warren, tel: +44 (0) 20 7633 2388; email: luke.warren@ipieca.org; internet: http://www.ipieca.org/downloads/climate_change/washington2006/workshop.html.

27 September-2 October, Geneva, Switzerland: 53rd SESSION OF THE TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD, UN CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD). For further information, contact the UNCTAD Secretariat, Intergovernmental Affairs and Outreach Service, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10; fax: + 41 22 917 02 14; email: correspondence@unctad.org; internet: <http://www.unctad.org/Templates/meeting.asp?intlItemID=2068&lang=1&m=11826&info=not>

2 October, Copenhagen, Denmark: TRADE AND PUBLIC HEALTH: PATENTS, MEDICAL SERVICES AND ACCESS TO MEDICINES. Organised by the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) and the Research Network on Governance, Economic Policy and Public Administration (GEPPA). This seminar concerns the consequences of globalisation and international regulation for the organisation of pharmaceutical industry and public health in general and in developing countries. No registration is required. For more information, please see <http://www.diis.dk/sw28064.asp>.

2-6 October, Geneva, Switzerland: THE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA (CITES) STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING. The standing committee provides policy guidance to the Secretariat concerning the implementation of the Convention and oversees the management of the Secretariat's budget. For further information, contact the CITES Secretariat, tel: +41 22 917 8139; fax: +41 22 797 3417; email: info@cites.org; internet: <http://www.cites.org/eng/news/meetings/sc54.shtml>.

3-10 October 2006, Geneva, Switzerland: UN CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (UNCTAD) BOARD, MID-TERM REVIEW. The purpose of the mid-term review is not only to review the implementation of the São Paulo Consensus, but also to take into account major events and consider the direction UNCTAD should take in its work for the next two years. The theme of the dialogue is "UNCTAD, development, and the way forward." For further information, contact the UNCTAD Secretariat, Intergovernmental Affairs and Outreach Service, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10; fax: + 41 22 917 02 14; email: correspondence@unctad.org; internet: <http://www.unctad.org/Templates/meeting.asp?intlItemID=2068&lang=1&m=12032&info=highlights>.

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.

27-29 September: Trade Policy Review Body - Congo

Other Upcoming Events

16-17 November, Terrassa, Spain: INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABILITY MEASUREMENT AND MODELLING. The Sustainable Development paradigm, as well as its measurement and modelling, has been evolving from its very first conception to our present days through an integrated process of all dimensions of the notion, namely, the economic environmental social and institutional. For this reason, modelling and measuring are crucial deeds in order to build societies more equitable, fair and shared in common. Hence, it is required to develop clear methodologies and instruments to measure, model and evaluate Sustainable Development. In this logic the 1st International Conference on Sustainability Measurement and Modelling -ICSMM 2006- is to become an interacting forum for those organizations, institutions, and experts interested in Sustainability Measurement, Modelling and Evaluating issues. For further information contact the Conference Secretariat (CIMNE), tel: +34 934 017 441; fax: +34 934 016 517; email: icsmm@cimne.upc.edu; internet: <http://congress.cimne.upc.es/icsmm06/frontal/>.

RESOURCES

THE WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2007: DEVELOPMENT AND THE NEXT GENERATION. By the World Bank, 2006. There has never been a better time to invest in young people in developing countries. Those who are 12-24 years of age number 1.3 billion and make up the largest youth cohort in history. Today's young people are the next generation of workers, entrepreneurs, parents, active citizens and leaders who have relatively fewer dependents because of lower birth rates. Countries need to seize this window of opportunity to invest in the future before the aging process closes it. World Development Report 2007: Development and the Next Generation discusses priorities for government action across five youth transitions that shape young people's human capital: learning, working, staying healthy, forming families, and exercising citizenship. To access this resource visit <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTRESEARCH/EXTWDRS/EXTWDR2007/0,,menu>

PK:1489865~pagePK:64167702~piPK:64167676~theSitePK:1489834,00.html.

DOHA DEVELOPMENT AGENDA AND AID FOR TRADE. By the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, 2006. This paper summarises recent developments in the Doha Round negotiations and aid for trade. It reviews existing mechanisms for cross-country and regional aid for trade needs. It proposes possible options to overcome the coordination and capacity problems affecting regional cooperation. To access this publication visit <http://www.imf.org/external/np/pp/eng/2006/080906.pdf>.

AGRICULTURAL TRADE LIBERALIZATION AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS, NIGER. By 3D --> Trade --> Human Rights --> Equitable Economy, 2006. This report describes how women suffer disproportionately from liberalization of agriculture trade. It has been submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, which will assess the enjoyment of women's rights in Niger in 2007. To access this resource visit http://www.3dthree.org/pdf_3D/3DCEDAWNigerAg.pdf.

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