

LEAD STORIES

CHINA VOWS TO RAMP UP AID, INVESTMENT,
TRADE WITH AFRICA 1

WTO MEMBERS APPROVE VIETNAM'S ACCESSION 2

INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS ON AGRICULTURE
CONTINUE, THOUGH WTO TALKS REMAIN
SUSPENDED 4

OTHER NEWS

WTO MEMBERS NEED MORE TIME TO EXAMINE
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PLAN FOR 2007 5

IN BRIEF

BATTLE LINES DRAWN ON FUTURE EMISSIONS
COMMITMENTS AT UN CLIMATE MEET 6

US, MALAYSIA CLOSER TO FTA DEAL 7

EU MOVES TOWARDS INCREASED TRANSPARENCY
ON FARM SUBSIDIES 7

SCIENTISTS SOUND ALARM ON FUTURE OF WORLD
FISHERIES 8

NEW FORUM HOLDS FIRST MEETING ON INTERNET
GOVERNANCE 8

WTO IN BRIEF

NEW WTO REPORT: TRADE GROWTH
DECELERATES, OIL REVENUES BOOM 9

EVENTS & RESOURCES

VACANCIES 9

EVENTS 10

RESOURCES 12

LEAD STORIES

CHINA VOWS TO RAMP UP AID, INVESTMENT, TRADE WITH AFRICA

Political and business leaders from China and several African countries vowed to expand trade and investment flows, as well as other forms of bilateral cooperation, during a 4-5 November summit in Beijing.

In his opening speech, Chinese President Hu Jintao promised to double Beijing's current level of development assistance to African countries by 2009. In addition, he pledged USD 5 billion in concessional loans and credits over the same period along with a further USD 5 billion to set up a fund that will encourage Chinese businesses to invest in Africa. By some accounts China is already a bigger lender to the continent than either the US or the World Bank.

Hu announced new debt cancellation initiatives and the extension of duty-free market access to more products from Africa's least-developed countries that have diplomatic relations with China. He also unveiled plans to train 15,000 African professionals and to support regional efforts to combat malaria and promote economic integration.

Vows to double trade flows

The summit also saw USD 1.9 billion in business deals struck between China and Africa primarily in the minerals, infrastructure and telecommunications sectors. These include Chinese state-owned conglomerate Citic's USD 938 million agreement to build an aluminium smelter in Egypt and China Civil Engineering Company's commitment to build a USD 300 million highway in Nigeria.

Senior officials from 48 of the 53 African countries -- including 35 heads of state -- attended the third conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, making it the largest ever. They adopted a declaration, proclaiming the establishment of a "new type of strategic partnership" between China and Africa, calling for enhanced "South-South cooperation and North-

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South dialogue to promote balanced, coordinated and sustainable development of the global economy." The document urged rich countries to boost foreign aid spending, honour commitments to open markets and expand debt relief in order to help African countries reduce poverty, control desertification, and achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals.

Governments vowed to double trade volumes between Africa and China to USD 100 billion by 2010. The USD 50 billion in trade projected for this year already represents a near-fivefold increase on five years ago.

Much of the growth in China-Africa trade and investment has been driven by China's drive to secure imports of commodities, including oil, to feed its rapidly growing economy. One third of China's oil imports come from Africa - primarily from Sudan and Nigeria. In recent years Chinese companies, many of them state-owned or affiliated, have vastly increased their operations in the continent.

Concerns about China's loans and investment

Critics warn that China's commercial involvement -- like its loans -- has not been tied to human rights, governance, or environmental principles. In the face of popular pressure most Western banks and governments, as well as the World Bank, have established minimum conditions for making loans to support investment projects. Indeed, the summit was attended by the presidents of Sudan and Zimbabwe, who run authoritarian regimes that have been ostracised by much of the international community for their poor human rights records.

World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz recently criticized China for not basing loans on the Equator Principles, a voluntary set of social and environmental standards, followed by nearly 80 percent of the world's commercial banks. He said that Chinese lenders risked repeating Western banks' history of making loans to support damaging behaviour by corrupt regimes.

In a press release on China's Africa summit, Sophie Richardson, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch, insisted that claiming to be a "great friend of the African people and a responsible major power... doesn't square with staying silent while mass killings go on in [the Sudanese region of] Darfur. Africans do not need another external power enabling abusive regimes," she added. "They need all powers, including China, to place human rights at the centre of their policies."

Chinese officials reject these claims, insisting that they simply do not wish to impose values on their trading

partners. They also dismiss complaints from Western companies that Beijing has used its newfound influence to promote the interests of China's state-owned enterprises. Charles Onyango-Obbo, a Ugandan political commentator, suggested that Western criticism of China for failing to adhere to environmental standards when making loans to Africa was hypocritical. Writing in regional newspaper *The East African*, he noted that the US had no similar qualms about its massive trade with China.

South African President Thabo Mbeki said that transparency and good corporate governance would have to be central to the evolving partnership between Africa and China.

The summit declaration stressed the participating African countries' commitment to the 'one-China' policy. This is an oblique reference to Taiwan, which Beijing views as a renegade province. Nevertheless, the *New York Times* reports that China did invite the five African countries that have diplomatic relations with Taipei instead of Beijing to the summit. None elected to attend.

ICTSD reporting; "China to Double Aid to Africa," UN INTEGRATED REGIONAL INFORMATION NETWORKS, 4 November 2006; "President Hu: wide-ranging consensus reached during Beijing summit," XINHUA, 5 November 2006; "Will China's overture to Africa help Indian cause?," TIMES OF INDIA, 6 November 2006; "Summit ends with pledges on aid and swipe at critics," FINANCIAL TIMES, 6 November 2006; "China Courts Africa, Angling for Strategic Gains," NEW YORK TIMES, 3 November 2006; "Africa, China must work as partners," BUSINESS DAY, 6 November 2006; "The Beijing Africa Summit," DAILY TRUST (Abuja), 3 November 2006; "'Win-Win' Deals at China-Africa Summit," INTER PRESS SERVICE, 6 November 2006; "Wolfowitz slams China banks on Africa lending," FINANCIAL TIMES, 24 October 2006; "China in Africa: Strictly Business," COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, 6 November 2006; "We have read Africa's future, and it is written in Chinese...," THE EAST AFRICAN, 6 November 2006.

WTO MEMBERS APPROVE VIETNAM'S ACCESSION

WTO Members on 7 November formally approved Vietnam's membership in the global trade body, bringing to an end a process that had lasted over 11 years.

With the WTO General Council's approval of Vietnam's package of accession commitments, the only steps that remain for Vietnam to attain full membership are for Hanoi itself to ratify the deal and notify the WTO of its ratification. As Vietnam's National Assembly is expected to do so on 28 November, the country should become the WTO's 150th member on 28 December, following a 30-day waiting period.

Details of the accession deal

Vietnam's accession agreement consists of more than 800 pages of documents detailing its liberalisation commitments on goods and services, along with the WTO working party's report on its institutional and legal framework and the various reforms it has committed to undertake.

Under the terms of accession, tariffs on most goods will ultimately be capped at between zero and 35 percent, with changes phased in over varying periods up to 2014. A handful of products are protected by tariff rate quotas, which are scheduled to be expanded until they disappear. Vietnam has promised not to subsidise agricultural exports. As a developing country, it will be allowed to make 'de minimis' payments worth up to 10 percent of the value of domestic agricultural production, and provide additional trade-distorting support of up to USD 246 million. Like other WTO Members, it will be allowed to spend an unlimited amount on domestic support measures to that have no direct impact on prices or quantities produced.

Vietnam has also signed the plurilateral Information Technology Agreement, which commits it to allow duty-free imports of several computer and electronics products. In some cases the zero duty will apply immediately, but in others it will be phased in over four to eight years.

Hanoi has committed to increase foreign ownership limits on a range of services, in some cases to 100 percent. It has also agreed to open up services sectors including banking, insurance and telecommunications to foreign ownership.

The report of the WTO working party on Vietnam's accession notes that Hanoi has committed to abide by International Monetary Fund (IMF) and WTO rules. It has also promised to continue privatising state enterprises; to harmonise registration procedures for foreign and domestic traders; and to simplify its system of excise duties.

Challenges loom, but positive attitude prevails

Some have questioned whether the deep liberalisation commitments that Vietnam had to agree to in order to join the WTO will have costs that outweigh the benefits

of membership. Civil society groups had described the demands that Vietnam faced in its bilateral market access negotiations as overly onerous. During the talks, Vietnamese government officials had complained that they were being asked to do more than other comparable countries (see BRIDGES Weekly, 26 July 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/06-07-26/wtoinbrief.htm>).

Many businesses will need to adapt quickly to keep up with foreign competition. Vietnamese exports will still be liable to face anti-dumping duties by developed nations, such as those recently imposed by the EU on shoes and by the US on shrimp. However, they will now be able to seek legal redress at the WTO if they deem such measures unfair.

Even WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy acknowledged that the price of joining the WTO was increasing every year. He told Agence France Presse that this was "for the simple reason that the cost of not belonging to the club increases with each accession."

While Vietnamese government officials acknowledge the challenges that increased foreign competition will pose to the Vietnamese economy, both Vietnam and the WTO remain overwhelmingly positive about the prospects that membership creates for the Southeast Asian country.

Shortly after the General Council's decision, Lamy said that "Vietnam has shown how anchoring domestic reforms in the WTO can yield dramatic results. Vietnam's economic growth topped 8 percent last year, foreign direct investment rose steeply to over USD 6 billion, and exports surged by over 20 percent. More must surely follow with the new laws, administrative measures, and commitments on goods and services that are in Vietnam's membership package."

Vietnamese Trade Minister Truong Dinh Tuyen said "WTO accession poses major challenges to Vietnam's economy. However, we do believe that with cooperation extended by the Members, Vietnam will make the most of opportunities, successfully handling challenges, ensuring fast and sustainable growth, [and] pro-actively playing its part for the development of the multilateral trading system."

International firms are already looking to take advantage of Vietnam's more open markets. However, Vietnam will not be obliged to extend its new trade concessions to US businesses until Washington votes to normalise trade relations with Hanoi. Upon the announcement of the WTO's approval of Vietnam's terms of accession, US Trade Representative Susan Schwab called on Congress to quickly do so. Congress is expected to vote on Permanent Normal Trade

Relations legislation on 13 November, when it reconvenes following the recent midterm elections.

"Communist Vietnam Will Become WTO's 150th Member," REUTERS, 7 November 2006; "Cost of Joining the WTO Becoming Higher: Lamy," AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE, 7 November 2006; "General Council approves Viet Nam's Membership," WTO PRESS RELEASES, 7 November 2006; "Intel to treble Vietnam Investment to \$1 Bln," REUTERS, 8 November 2006; "Opportunities, Threats for Vietnam Post-WTO," THAN NIEN NEWS, 7 November 2006; "NA to Approve Vietnam's WTO Accession on Nov. 28," VIETNAMNET BRIDGE, 17 October 2006; "Statement by U.S. Trade Representative Susan C. Schwab on WTO Members' Approval of Vietnam's Terms of Accession to the World Trade Organization," UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE, 7 November 2006; "U.S. Businesses Want Normal Trade Status For Vietnam: Official," THANH NIEN NEWS, 17 October 2006

INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS ON AGRICULTURE CONTINUE, THOUGH WTO TALKS REMAIN SUSPENDED

Formal trade negotiations at the WTO remain frozen as they have been since late July when Members proved unable to agree on farm subsidy and tariff cuts. Nonetheless, Geneva-based negotiators say that delegations continue to meet informally.

Trade diplomats from Canada, Chile, Indonesia, Kenya, New Zealand and Norway met from 6-8 November in the Swiss town of Vevey. Representatives from those countries also met in Oslo in October (see BRIDGES Weekly, 25 October 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/06-10-25/wtoinbrief.htm#1>).

The 'non-G-6', so-called to distinguish them from Australia, Brazil, the EU, India, Japan and the US -- the six Members that have been the core players in the Doha Round talks -- held a broad discussion on all of the areas in the negotiations, including farm trade, industrial goods, services, rules, and development. The purpose of the meeting was reportedly a general brainstorming session rather than an exploration of specific technical issues.

As with the Oslo meeting officials were reluctant to disclose details about the meeting. Nevertheless, one source suggested that the countries' perspectives remained quite far apart and did not appear to have changed substantially since the negotiations were suspended.

The same source indicated that this 'non-G-6' is planning to meet again at the end of the month.

The six countries that met in Vevey cover a cross-section of several of the main interest groups in the highly contentious farm trade negotiations. However, they are believed to have discussed various aspects of the agriculture talks including subsidy cuts, market access, and the flexibilities that Members will receive to shield some products from tariff reduction.

Farm trade negotiators from all Member delegations are expected to meet for an 'informal transparency forum' in Geneva on 10 November, at the initiative of New Zealand Ambassador Crawford Falconer who also chairs the suspended agriculture talks. One trade diplomat said that the gathering will be an opportunity for each bloc to describe what it has been doing.

The meeting will follow a series of informal bilateral and small-group discussions between Members that took place when capital-based officials were in Geneva for the 31 October regular (non-negotiating) session of the Committee on Agriculture (see BRIDGES Weekly, 7 November 2006, <http://www.ictsd.org/weekly/06-11-01/story2.htm>). Sources say that the EU, US and Japan all held bilateral meetings with various delegations in Geneva.

In a note sent to delegations on 3 November, Falconer recalled that "the whole rationale for 'suspension' had been to facilitate informal contacts between delegations that would intensify efforts to move things forward." Since such discussions had indeed been taking place, he said that it was "becoming increasingly anomalous that we don't have any fully multilateral forum to keep each other up-to-date on what is going on." Stressing that he was proposing the "totally informal" gathering in a "purely personal capacity," he added that it could be a useful opportunity "for briefly updating each other on where our respective conversations have been taking us."

Sources say that Falconer believes that negotiators need to continue to come together and talk to each other if the round is to have a chance of restarting.

One negotiator said that Falconer, in his capacity as ambassador of New Zealand, was also convening a 'fireside chat' of ambassadors from a smaller group of countries on 9 November.

Diplomats appeared divided on whether the conclusion of the US midterm Congressional elections on 7 November would affect the negotiations. Some suggested that the end of the campaign may allow for some progress; others suggested that no immediate changes were likely.

Victorious Democratic members of the House of Representatives, including the future chair of a key committee on trade, have already pledged to pursue

bipartisan cooperation with their Republican colleagues on trade issues. On the other hand, civil society group Public Citizen has hailed the election for bringing several opponents of the WTO into Congress.

ICTSD reporting.

OTHER NEWS

WTO MEMBERS NEED MORE TIME TO EXAMINE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PLAN FOR 2007

Many Members said they were satisfied with the WTO Secretariat's plans for trade-related technical assistance in 2007, at a 3 November meeting of the Committee on Trade and Development (CTD). However, sources report that they were unable to adopt the 'Technical Assistance and Training Plan' for 2007 (WT/COMTD/W/151), since some African countries, which are among the major targets of such assistance, indicated that they would need more time to study it and make comments. Members are expected to consider the document again at the next CTD session, scheduled for 28 November.

The WTO Secretariat drafted the plan and circulated it to delegations in October. At the recent meeting, Members also discussed evaluations of trade-related technical assistance (TRTA) efforts, focusing principally on an external review by three civil society organisations and an 'audit' by the Secretariat of technical cooperation provided in 2005 (WT/COMTD/W/148).

The plan for 2007 works from the premise that training, technical assistance and capacity building are central to the development dimension of the multilateral trading system, and that the suspension of the Doha Round negotiations will not alter Members' need for such aid. It focuses on the need to enhance Members' capacity to implement their existing multilateral commitments, as well as to participate in negotiations.

Negotiating and implementing commitments overlap with some of the recommendations made by the WTO's Aid for Trade Task Force, though that panel's wider mandate led it to also prescribe funding for building infrastructure and supply-side capacity in developing countries.

The technical assistance plan stresses that it will be flexible based on recipients' needs. For example, training efforts will be related to the eventual outcomes of the ongoing discussions on Aid for Trade and to the operationalisation of the recommendations for

enhancing the multi-agency Integrated Framework for trade-related technical assistance to least-developed countries (LDCs). The plan itself could be adjusted as those initiatives take shape, it adds.

TRTA plan calls for focus on quality, recipients' needs

The WTO's general objective will remain to help Members profitably integrate into the multilateral trading system, and to take part in trade negotiations. In light of their pressing trade development needs, LDCs will be priority recipients of such aid.

Technical assistance 'products' in 2007 will broadly cover a range of general WTO-related training courses in Geneva and in recipient regions, as well as more specialised and advanced training, both in Geneva and specific countries. They will also aim to buttress academic support for capacity building, to improve facilities for training and technical assistance, and to promote e-learning. The Secretariat also envisages outreach activities for parliamentarians and civil society groups, as well as support for academics, doctoral students, and universities. It will continue its trainee and internship programmes.

The newest annual framework for technical assistance attempts to incorporate lessons learned from previous years, as well as views that Members expressed in formal and informal consultations. It emphasised the importance of integrating training and technical cooperation, explaining that the need to maximise synergies between the two motivated the establishment in 2003 of the WTO's Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation (ITTC), which coordinates TA work.

Plan responded to external review's findings

The Secretariat identified priorities for 2007 with guidance from the main recommendations of the first ever independent 'strategic review' of WTO technical assistance. It was carried out in 2005 and 2006 by the Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS), the Latin American School of Social Sciences (FLACSO), and the North-South Institute (NSI).

These priorities included the quality of the TA activities, the methodology of training; making the training materials more accessible; basing assistance on systematic needs assessment; strategic cooperation with other agencies; better participant selection; the development of follow-up activities; stronger use of e-training; and the exploration of effective ways to outsource some training activities on WTO basics.

The strategic review had focused on three main issues -- the WTO's comparative advantage in offering TRTA

vis-à-vis other agencies; the relevance of such assistance to Members and to participants, and the efficiency and management of WTO TRTA. The three organisations, which closely examined nine recipient countries, submitted their 158-page report (WT/COMTD/W/152) to the Secretariat in July.

Among the review's conclusions was that the need to maintain neutrality "had limited the WTO trainers' willingness to discuss policy flexibility within the WTO rules and the implications of alternative negotiating proposals." Many of the TA recipients surveyed felt that "WTO training was oriented more to building national officials' capacity as effective rule takers than as effective negotiators and rule-makers."

The review urged the WTO to move from a relatively Geneva-centric model to a more regional and in-country approach for TRTA. It suggested that the WTO could grant the Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation the power and autonomy necessary to ensure that non-WTO organisations and people can be brought in to provide the sort of TRTA that the WTO cannot provide due to its neutrality mandate.

The independent assessment also revealed that recipients widely agreed on the WTO's expertise with regard to multilateral rules, procedures, and the state of play of negotiations. However, several questioned its competence with regard to issues such as development dimensions, negotiating techniques and analytical skills, and knowledge of national and regional specificities.

The Secretariat's own audit of technical cooperation work, for its part, found that progress had been made at adapting TRTA activities to better match the needs and expectations of recipients, but that more remained to be done. It suggested that Trade Policy Review missions could be used to better assess country's needs, potentially by including personnel from the Institute for Training and Technical Cooperation.

The Technical Assistance and Training Plan for 2007 specifies that the key accountability mechanisms for results will remain internal evaluations by TA providers and the technical cooperation audit. It acknowledged that it had not had time incorporate the findings of the strategic review, which had called for a move beyond self-evaluation. The Secretariat suggested that the plan might be changed based on Members' discussions in the CTD.

Funding situation "more critical than ever"

The plan appealed to Members to come forward with funding, noting that pledges and contributions into the WTO's fund for TRTA activities in 2006 fell short of the requirements. "The situation is more critical than ever before," it said, since no funds from 2006 will be

available to pay for implementing the TA plan at the beginning of 2007.

Once the CTD approves the TA plan and a sum for how much it will cost, the WTO budget committee will work with the General Council to secure funding for its implementation.

ICTSD reporting.

IN BRIEF

BATTLE LINES DRAWN ON FUTURE EMISSIONS COMMITMENTS AT UN CLIMATE MEET

Countries used the first days of a UN climate meeting in Nairobi to stake out their broad positions on greenhouse gas reduction obligations post-2012, when the first commitment period under the Kyoto Protocol ends.

In a working group on the issue, delegations widely agreed on the need to avoid a gap between commitment periods to ensure continuity and predictability for carbon traders and investors. However, they differed widely on the timetable for discussions and who should take on what commitments.

So-called 'Annex I' countries -- the mainly developed country parties that have committed to undertaking reductions in the current period -- resisted calls from developing countries to finalise negotiations for Annex I countries by 2008. They stressed the need for further studies and discussions.

Canada expressed the view that emissions reductions by Annex I countries should only be seen as "one piece of the puzzle" in the international effort to combat climate change. It called for complementary measures including reduction commitments by non-Annex I parties, implicitly targeting major developing country emitters.

Developing countries countered that current uncertainties should not prevent parties from taking action in light of the potentially serious and irreversible negative impacts of climate change. They felt that the EU's proposed target of limiting global temperature rise to 2 degrees Celsius (based on a stabilisation of carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere at 450 parts per million) was insufficient to adequately mitigate these impacts. They called on delegations to agree on a work plan to finalise negotiations on Annex I countries' commitments expeditiously.

The 'Ad Hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties' session is being held alongside the second Meeting of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (COP/MOP 2) and the twelfth Conference of the Parties (COP 12) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), running from 6 to 17 November.

Bridges Weekly will provide further updates on the negotiations in forthcoming issues.

Conference documents are available at http://unfccc.int/meetings/cop_12/items/3754.php.

Daily reporting is provided by the Earth Negotiations Bulletin, <http://www.iisd.ca/climate/cop12>.

ICTSD reporting.

US, MALAYSIA CLOSER TO FTA DEAL

The US and Malaysia concluded their third round of free trade agreement (FTA) talks last week, making progress on goods trade as well as technical standards issues. The two countries hope to reach an agreement by early next year.

The Bush Administration's Trade Promotion Authority expires at the end of June 2007, after which Congress will regain the power to seek specific amendments to trade agreements instead of having to vote either yes or no.

Barbara Weisel, Assistant US Trade Representative for the Asia-Pacific, said that some sensitive issues remain unresolved, although the talks could still finish by next year. "We're in the middle of negotiations now, and we'll have to see as the process continues whether or not we can conclude (in time)," she told reporters.

The Malaysian government's affirmative action policy for public procurement remains the largest stumbling block. This policy gives special privileges for contracts, jobs, and housing to majority 'bumiputra' ethnic Malays, as a way to help them compete with the wealthier Chinese minority.

The strategy, though some credit it with promoting social peace in the country, is problematic in light of a possible FTA. This is because in addition to shutting out domestic non-bumiputra companies from competing for government contracts, it also excludes US and other foreign businesses. US officials have pointed out that as a matter of reciprocity, Washington has barred Malaysian companies from seeking to compete for USD 250 billion worth of government contracts.

Other obstacles include Malaysia's highly protected state car industry, its ban on majority foreign ownership of banks, and intellectual property rights issues.

Malaysia is the United States' 10th-largest trading partner, with USD 44 billion in two-way trade in 2005. Officials say that figure will double by 2010 under a trade accord.

"US electronic firms in Malaysia see pact boosting exports," BUSINESS TIMES, 2 November 2006; "US-Malaysia trade talks may not meet US deadline -- US official," FORBES, 3 November 2006; "Disagreements on US, Malaysia on free trade pact," JAMAICA GLEANER, 5 November 2006.

EU MOVES TOWARDS INCREASED TRANSPARENCY ON FARM SUBSIDIES

Following a decision in principle by EU member states to eventually reveal the identity of all farm subsidy recipients, the European Commission on 8 November created a new page on its website that links to information about Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) payments 11 countries. However, many of the EU's biggest subsidisers, including France, are among the 14 members that have not yet made such data publicly available. Moreover, they may not do so in the near future.

It is widely believed that greater transparency about who receives CAP subsidies will weaken the case against reforms by publicising the fact that the lion's share of payments goes to a relatively small number of large farms and agroindustrial companies.

EU governments agreed in October to a Commission proposal that would have each member disclose the identity of all farm subsidy recipients. A committee of ambassadors from each member state accepted the proposal, setting the stage for economic and finance ministers to rubber stamp it at a meeting scheduled for 28 November, following discussions with the European Parliament. However, France and some other governments successfully managed to ensure that disclosure requirements would not become compulsory until 2009 -- after both the French elections and the halfway mark of the 2003-2013 CAP reform process.

Jack Thurston, co-founder of the transparency campaign farmsubsidy.org, said "It's great news that European governments are endorsing transparency. But it is quite wrong that we should be kept in the dark until 2009, as the French government is reported to be insisting upon." He pointed out that since the EU would be reviewing its entire EUR 100 billion budget in 2008-09, "it is critical that transparency is in place well before

this time." Expressing concern that the eventual regulations might provide EU member states with 'wiggle room' to avoid full disclosure, he called on European Parliament members to push for expedited transparency.

The webpage currently contains links to further information for Belgium, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and the UK. CAP payments are jointly managed by Brussels and each member state.

The Commission's new site is at http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/funding/index_en.htm.

"Transparency: Commission facilitates access to Member State information on beneficiaries of CAP payments," EUROPA, 8 November 2006; "EU Subsidy Payments: CAP Transparency," GERMAN MARSHALL FUND, 30 October 2006; "Another victory, but the battle for transparency goes on," FARMSUBSIDY.ORG, 20 October 2006; "Subsidy data to be made public," COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY, 26 October 2006; "EU to agree full transparency on farm subsidies," FARMSUBSIDY.ORG, 18 October 2006.

SCIENTISTS SOUND ALARM ON FUTURE OF WORLD FISHERIES

Worldwide fisheries could collapse by 2048 if no action is taken to halt current levels of overfishing, an international group of leading ecologists and economists has warned. In findings from an extensive global study published in the journal *Science* on 3 November, they said that at current rates, fish stocks risked declining to an extent that would render commercial fishing impossible and recovery unlikely.

The four-year evaluation found that about one third of open sea fisheries have already collapsed, a trend exacerbated by the changes produced by broader losses in marine biodiversity. The researchers pointed to fishing, pollution, climate change, increasing acidity of the ocean and the destruction of marine habitats as some of the key factors for the decline.

"Unless we fundamentally change the way we manage all the ocean species together, as working ecosystems, then this century is the last century of wild seafood," said Steve Palumbi from Stanford University, one of the scientists involved in the report.

On a more positive note, the authors stressed that the impending collapse could still be averted. The study highlighted better use of marine protected areas as one

possible avenue to safeguard the stocks. Currently, only a minuscule proportion of the world's oceans -- less than 1 percent -- are protected from overexploitation.

Environmental groups echoed the researchers' concerns. "For centuries people have regarded the ocean as an inexhaustible supply of food. But in recent years human actions have finally pushed oceans to their limit," said Simon Cripps, director of WWF's Global Marine Programme. He urged governments and industry to act quickly before reaching "the point of no return for fisheries and the marine environment".

Many fishing industry groups greeted the study with scepticism. "It is a doomsday prediction that ignores the reality of what the world is actually trying to do to remove the ills that it describes", said Bertie Armstrong of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation.

The WTO's now-suspended Doha Round negotiations included talks aimed at limiting fisheries subsidies, which can serve to encourage overfishing.

"Only 50 years left' for sea fish," BBC, 2 November 2006; "Fishing report 'ignores reality'," BBC, 3 November; "WWF urges governments and industry to act urgently on oceans' crisis," WWF PRESS RELEASE, 3 November 2006; "Scientists warn of fish stocks collapse," FINANCIAL TIMES, 3 November 2006.

NEW FORUM HOLDS FIRST MEETING ON INTERNET GOVERNANCE

Spam, cybercrime, online freedom of expression, security, multilingualism, and bridging the 'digital divide' are some of the issues participants addressed at the inaugural meeting of a new UN-sponsored forum on internet governance.

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF), created by the UN World Summit on the Information Society, met in Athens from 30 October - 2 November to focus on 'internet governance for development.' The IGF is mandated to foster "the sustainability, robustness, security, stability, and development of the internet." It is not a decision-making body, but simply a forum for discussion and building multi-stakeholder coalitions on how the internet could best be used to fight crime and promote public goals such as access to knowledge.

The 1200-odd participants from the private sector, civil society, academia, and the technical community held a wide range of panel discussions focused on four broad themes -- openness, security, diversity and access.

One issue that garnered much attention was the existing specification that domain names be comprised of characters from the Latin alphabet. Many participants agreed that allowing people to use the internet in their own language was a necessary step to broadening access in poor countries. "The new society leaves people isolated, marginalised. I think the digital divide is not as important as the linguistic divide," said Adama Samassékou, President of the African Academy of Languages.

Nitin Desai, who heads the IGF, explained that "the big expansion in the internet in the next five years is going to take place in developing countries. A lot of it in countries which are not English speaking ... where people don't even know the Latin alphabet, for instance, China"

However, technical experts called the transition to multi-lingual domain names a "huge technical challenge." "This is like changing the bricks in the basement of a multi-storey building," said Paul Twoney, president of the California-based Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), the body that oversees internet domain names.

The next meeting of the IGF is scheduled for November 2007 in Brazil.

For more information on the IGF, please see <http://www.intgovforum.org/>.

ICTSD Reporting; "UN delegates: English isn't good enough," CNET NEWS, 1 November 2006; "Double-byte domains a risk," AUSTRALIAN IT, 31 October 2006; "Asia to lead web growth: UN Internet chief," INDIATIMES.com, 30 October 2006.

WTO IN BRIEF

NEW WTO REPORT: TRADE GROWTH DECELERATES, OIL REVENUES BOOM

The growth of world trade slowed down in 2005 due to lower net global economic activity, according to new data from the WTO. The global trade body's annual International Trade Statistics report, released on 9 November, says that global merchandise trade grew by 6 percent in 2005, compared to 9.5 percent the year before.

WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy used this finding to urge reluctant governments to step up efforts to restart the suspended Doha Round negotiations. "At a time of uncertainty a strong, rules-based multilateral trading system is the best insurance policy for the world

economy," he said upon the release of the report. "The lingering indecisiveness of the Doha Round further saps the confidence in the multilateral trading system as an engine of economic growth and development," he added. "It's time for political action to bring the round to a successful conclusion."

The 110-page report provides a detailed overview of trade developments by region and by product in 2005, along with data on longer-term trends in global commerce. It found that price developments, both increases and decreases, strongly influenced trade trends in 2005. Growth in manufactured goods slowed to 7 percent, while farm exports expanded by 5.5 percent -- higher than the year before.

Oil-exporting economies benefited from high world fuel prices, which also drove changes in regional trade flows. Russia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Venezuela, Algeria, Kuwait and Nigeria all recorded merchandise export revenue growth (in dollar terms) of at least 33 percent. Meanwhile, the US' trade deficit rose to a record USD 793 billion, worth almost 8 percent of total world merchandise exports. International trade in fuels and mining products increased by only 2.5 per cent in 2005.

Export prices for manufactured goods and agricultural products increased less in 2005 than in 2004.

Countries including Brazil, China, India, Russia, Poland, Mexico, and Hungary increased the value of their services exports by over 15 percent.

In spite of the deceleration, the report noted that global trade growth continues to outpace the rise in worldwide output.

To access the report, visit http://www.wto.org/english/news_e/pres06_e/pr457_e.htm.

"Rise in fuel prices during 2005 lifts shares of oil-exporters in world trade while US trade deficit reaches record level," WTO PRESS RELEASE, 9 November 2006.

EVENTS & RESOURCES

VACANCIES

Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS), a research, advocacy and networking group, is looking to recruit young research professionals at various levels to work at its offices in Jaipur, India in the areas of international trade, economic regulation, etc. The candidate should

have a postgraduate degree from an institute of good repute in economics, law, engineering, international affairs, management, or a related field, with a minimum of 2-3 years of work experience on these issues. Proficiency in English with excellent communication skills is essential. The job involves travel within India and abroad. If interested, please apply within 10 days with a detailed CV and 2 references, one of which may be your present employer. Also please send a write-up of approximately 800 words on why you are suitable for the job. Female candidates are encouraged to apply. For a detailed job profile please visit our website www.cuts-international.org. Please send your applications to hrd@cuts.org

International Lawyers and Economists Against Poverty (ILEAP), an independent, non-profit organization based in Toronto, Canada is searching for senior professional staff. ILEAP's overarching goal is to assist African and Caribbean governments and institutions to work on multilateral and bilateral trade negotiations. With a demand-driven approach, ILEAP aims to do this in two important ways: analytical support to trade negotiations and capacity-building. ILEAP is recruiting senior staff in order to enhance the professional leadership, strategic planning, research and networking of specific projects and the organization as a whole. Details can be found at www.ileap-jeicp.org or by writing to ILEAP at jobs@ileap-jeicp.org.

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: 9-15 November

13-14 November, London, UK: **SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MIGRANT REMITTANCES**. This conference is organized by the World Bank and the UK Department for International Development. The key objective of the second International Conference on Migrant Remittances is to provide a global forum to share ideas and international experience on sound practices to enhance the developmental impact of remittances among policy-makers, financial institutions, other market participants, experts, and the broad development community. For more information, e-mail Mr. José De Luna Martinez, jdellunamartinez@worldbank.org; Tel: +1 202 458 0367; Fax: +1 202 522 2433; internet: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK:21085887~menuPK:34482~pagePK:2524753~piPK:51421526~theSitePK:4607,00.html>.

13-17 November, Geneva, Switzerland: **WIPO STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LAWS OF TRADEMARKS, INDUSTRIAL DESIGNS AND GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS (SCT): 16th SESSION**. The World Intellectual Property Organization's committee on trademark law will consider whether it wishes to approve proposals for the improved circulation of information on international nonproprietary names for pharmaceutical substances. It may also make further recommendations on trademarks and international nonproprietary names. For more information see internet: http://www.wipo.int/meetings/en/topic.jsp?group_id=63.

14 November, Geneva, Switzerland: **ACCESS TO MEDICINES: FIVE YEARS AFTER DOHA-WHERE ARE WE, AND WHAT IS THE WAY FORWARD?** Médecins Sans Frontières, together with the Consumer Project on Technology, Third World Network, Health Action International and Oxfam are organising this discussion on access to medicine five years after the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health was signed at the WTO Ministerial Conference in Qatar. The objective of the Doha Declaration was to ensure that trade rules did not stand in the way of access to essential medicines. Five years down the road, it's time to take stock and examine whether Doha has held its promise to "...protect public health and (...) promote access to medicines for all," and what the options are for moving forward. Panellists and discussants will include representatives from developing and developed countries, intergovernmental organizations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), World Trade Organisation (WTO), as well as from civil society organizations. Sandwiches and light snacks will be provided. For further information, please contact: Mai Do on + 33 1 4021 2825 or Sarah Neerman, on + 41 22 849 8405

14-15 November, London, UK: **OIL AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**. Organised by the CWC Group, which provides communications strategies and products to the international oil, gas, power and investment sectors. The energy sector in oil- and gas-producing countries holds the key not only to boosting economic growth, but to developing local industries and contributing to social well-being. Key topics of discussion will include: how oil revenues can be utilised most effectively to ensure long-term growth and social progress; how to deal with the environmental and social challenges of meeting the global demand for energy; how a commitment to transparency benefits countries, companies and investors; why being socially and environmentally responsible is good for business; and opportunities for national and international oil companies to work together towards greater energy-related local output. The conference will have a particular focus on Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Nigeria, Angola, Brazil, Kuwait, and Norway. For more

information, e-mail: jleonard@thecwcgroup.com; tel: +44 207 978 0075; internet: http://www.thecwcgroup.com/conf_detail_home.asp?FP=1&CID=125.

14-16 November, Geneva, Switzerland. **EXPERT MEETING ON UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO SERVICES.** Organised by the UN Conference on Trade and Development's (UNCTAD) Commission on Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities. Discussions will serve to provide UNCTAD member states with a better understanding of the important role that universal access to services plays in efforts aimed at improving living conditions, economic growth, domestic supply capacity building, and trade in developing countries. The meeting will explore key services sectors that are essential from an infrastructural and human perspective, and address the role of government and the private sector in these services. It will consider national experiences and policies for ensuring access, analysing how they may differ across countries and sectors in line with specific national policy objectives. The meeting will review linkages between universal access policies and international rules on services trade, including services commitments at the WTO. The report of the expert meeting will be submitted to the next session of the Commission on Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities. For more information, fax: +41 22 907 00 44; e-mail: elisabeth.tuerk@unctad.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.

9-10 November: **TECHNICAL BARRIERS TO TRADE COMMITTEE**

14 November: **WORKING GROUP ON TRADE AND TRANSFER OF TECHNOLOGY**

15 November: **SUB-COMMITTEE ON LEAST-DEVELOPED COUNTRIES**

Other Upcoming Events

16 November, Washington, DC: **WTO DISPUTE SETTLEMENT -- AN UPDATE BY THE WTO'S LEGAL ADVISOR.** Organised by the Washington International Trade Association. The WTO Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU) provides a structured, treaty-based process for the timely settlement of trade disputes arising among the WTO's 149 Members. Since

the WTO's inception in 1995, 350 cases have been initiated under WTO dispute settlement procedures and 120 panels have been composed to adjudicate cases not otherwise resolved prior to the initiation of litigation proceedings. In the past several years, however, fewer cases have been brought to the WTO. Is this a long-term trend or just a short-term phenomenon? Bruce Wilson, Director, WTO Legal Affairs Division, will offer an updated look at the Dispute Settlement Understanding and a discussion of pending DSU reform proposals. For more information, e-mail: events@wita.org; internet: http://www.wita.org/index.php?tg=addon/4/form&idx=2&id_app=25&id_step=79&id_form=62&form_row=481&popup=0&parent_id_form=40&parent_id_step=78&form_menu=&trt_step=1&form_value=WTO%2BDispute%2BSettlement%2B-%2BAn%2BUpdate%2Bby%2Bthe%2BWTO%2527s%2BLegal%2BAdvisor.

18-19 November, Melbourne, Australia: **MEETING OF G-20 FINANCE MINISTERS AND CENTRAL BANK GOVERNORS.** The G-20 is an informal forum that promotes open and constructive discussion between industrial and emerging-market countries on key issues related to global economic stability. By contributing to the strengthening of the international financial architecture and providing opportunities for dialogue on national policies, international co-operation, and international economic and financial institutions, the G-20 helps to support growth and development across the globe. For more information see internet: <http://www.g20.org/Public/Melb2006/index.jsp>.

20-21 November, Paris, France: **OECD GLOBAL FORUM ON AGRICULTURE: POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN NON-MEMBER ECONOMIES.** Organised by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. This forum will discuss agricultural policy developments in Brazil, China, South Africa, India, Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria and Romania. Country reports including updated estimates of agricultural support will be presented by the Secretariat and discussed with country experts and government officials. Country representatives will comment on expected future directions of agricultural policy reform. The Forum will also discuss the lessons learned from past reforms in developing and OECD countries, as well as current market prospects and trade issues. A special session will focus on the latest developments and new activities by the OECD, the World Bank and the FAO in the measurement and interpretation of agricultural support. For more information see internet: <http://www.oecd.org/agr/meet/apnme> (login: meetings, password: apnme) or e-mail: wayne.jones@oecd.org

29 November-1 December, Geneva, Switzerland. **UNCTAD INTERGOVERNMENTAL EXPERT MEETING ON THE PARTICIPATION OF**

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN NEW DYNAMIC SECTORS OF WORLD TRADE: REVIEW OF THE ENERGY SECTOR. This meeting, organized by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), aims to promote participation of developing countries in dynamic and new sectors of world trade. It will focus on the challenges posed to developing countries by a changing international energy economy. Issues of particular consideration will be the need to diversify energy sources, and the need to secure access to reliable and reasonably-priced energy in order to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development. For more information see internet: <http://www.unctad.org/Templates/meeting.asp?intItemID=2068&lang=1&m=11907&info=not>; tel: +41 (0)22 917 56 42 or +41 (0)22 917 58 65; fax: +41 (0)22 917 00 44, e-mail: khalil.rahman@unctad.org or victor.ognitvsev@unctad.org

experiencing "death of distance," South-South trade is still severely constrained by distance-related trade costs and that reducing South-South tariff barriers can have a major impact on trade flows. The second part employs a computable general equilibrium model in a forward looking assessment of the balance of gains from multilateral trade liberalization, also focusing on South-South trade. This analysis suggests that, from a development point of view, South-South liberalisation is at least as important as tariff-free market access to Northern markets. To access this paper, visit [http://appli1.oecd.org/olis/2006doc.nsf/linkto/tc-tc\(2006\)8-final](http://appli1.oecd.org/olis/2006doc.nsf/linkto/tc-tc(2006)8-final).

RESOURCES

WORLD ENERGY OUTLOOK 2006. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Energy Agency (IEA), 7 November 2006. It explores two alternate international energy futures, and responds to the remit of the G-8 world leaders by mapping a new energy future, contrasting it with where we are now headed. It counts the costs and benefits of both futures and explains how to change course. The Outlook also addresses the world's economic reaction to high energy prices; recent trends in oil and gas investment; the prospects for a nuclear energy revival; future prospects for the biofuel industry; energy usage in developing countries; and recent energy trends in Brazil. For more information, internet: <http://www.worldenergyoutlook.org/2006.asp>.

STATE OF PLAY IN AGRICULTURAL NEGOTIATIONS: COUNTRY GROUPINGS' POSITIONS (NOVEMBER 2006 UPDATE). South Centre, November 2006. This note provides an overview of the position and groups of countries active in the WTO Agriculture negotiations with respect to critical issues under discussion in the market access pillar, the domestic support pillar, the export competition pillar, and the cotton initiative. To access the report, visit <http://www.southcentre.org/>.

SOUTH-SOUTH TRADE IN GOODS. By Przemyslaw Kowalski and Ben Shepherd. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Trade Policy Working Paper No. 40, 16 October 2006. The empirical analysis presented in this paper indicates that trade between developing countries (South-South trade) offers a wide scope for specialisation and efficiency gains. The first part of the paper explores past trends in world goods trade with a special focus on South-South trade. Analysis shows that far from

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