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LEAD STORIES

PLANNED WTO MINI-MINISTERIAL POSTPONED AS PROSPECTS FOR DOHA DEAL DIMINISH

In another blow to the WTO's struggling Doha Round of trade talks, a mini-ministerial meeting that Director-General Pascal Lamy had tentatively planned for 13-15 December was postponed this week as major trading powers signalled they were unsure whether a deal could be struck.

The high-level gathering had originally been scheduled for this weekend, following recent calls from 20 economic powers for a deal to end the faltering Doha round of trade talks before the end of the year (see Bridges Weekly, 19 November 2008, <http://ictsd.net/i/news/bridgesweekly/34105/>). But negotiators have increasingly questioned the feasibility of that deadline, as intensive discussions over the past few weeks have failed to narrow gaps on the most controversial issues.

In a letter to delegations dated 8 December, Lamy left open the possibility that a ministerial could be called from 17 to 19 December, the last possible dates before the WTO breaks for the year. The draft negotiating texts on market-opening in the agricultural and industrial sectors that were released on Saturday had been "generally well received," Lamy said, and they had successfully "consolidate[d] the very real progress that has been made in the last few months" (see related stories, this issue).

But the Director-General struck a note of caution as well. "It is clear that we are closer to modalities today than last July," Lamy wrote. "At the same time the risks if we do not get there are higher today than they were last July. The potential cost of a second failure in less than six months and a deteriorating economic situation call for prudence; for a step by step approach in trying to minimise the risks while enhancing the chances of success."

But many officials have become increasingly gloomy as prospects for a deal seemed to diminish over the past week.

"There are still serious differences," Indian Commerce Secretary GK Pillai told India's Financial Express on Monday. "It is not sure if these texts can lead to a ministerial meeting," he said.

But sources indicated that recent consultations led by Lamy, as well as committee chairs Crawford Falconer (agriculture) and Luzius Wasescha (industrial goods), have produced some forward movement on contentious issues.

"We've seen some progress in Geneva in areas that really hung us up in July. That's really, really positive," US Trade Representative Susan Schwab said on Thursday, Reuters reported. But "there still are multiple outstanding issues," she added.

Sources indicated that Lamy was set to hold a teleconference on Wednesday with ministers from China, India and the US to discuss the three issues he has identified as critical: sector-specific liberalisation initiatives in the industrial goods talks, and cotton subsidies and the special safeguard mechanism in agricultural discussions.

Of these, several negotiators stressed to Bridges that resolving differences over sectorals would be critical to bettering the odds of striking a deal. Recent discussions between the US and China seemed to suggest that both parties are entrenched in their positions (see related article, this issue).

Trade sources acknowledged that progress had been made on the SSM since September in Falconer's informal consultations, and suggested that the recent Democratic victories in the US congressional and presidential elections might mean that the US may be more easily able to compromise on some agricultural issues.

But domestic politics in the US could hinder USTR Schwab's position in the talks. On Monday, 22 US Senators sent a letter to US President Bush warning him of their "serious concern about the direction of global agricultural trade negotiations in Geneva."

"We believe that the calendar should not drive the negotiations," the bipartisan group of lawmakers wrote. "An agreement that lacks the necessary balance will fail to win support in the Congress."

The letter, which has been widely circulated, could seriously undermine Schwab's credibility in the negotiations.

But economists warn that failing to produce a global trade deal could have far-reaching and strongly negative effects, especially given the ongoing economic crisis. A Doha agreement would prevent countries from further closing their borders to trade in the midst of the financial turmoil. Protectionist tendencies have arisen at times of economic instability in the past, only to exacerbate the downturn.

Australian trade minister Simon Crean echoed that sentiment on Monday: "We need to act now, hold a ministerial meeting, and reach a framework deal – because a breakthrough on Doha would make a major contribution to restoring confidence in a global economy battered by considerable uncertainty," he said in a statement.

Whether negotiators can bridge their remaining differences remains to be seen, but their window of opportunity is narrowing quickly.

ICTSD reporting. "Schwab sees progress in WTO talks, hurdles remain," REUTERS, 4 December 2008; "Differences in revised WTO texts will lead to Doha Round failure," THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS, 8 December 2008.

NEW NAMA TEXT RELEASED AMIDST DOHA GLOOM

Despite dimming prospects that ministers from around the world will meet in mid-December to try to strike a framework deal in the Doha Round of trade talks, the chair of the WTO industrial goods negotiations has issued an updated draft agreement setting out possible terms that would govern how governments cut tariffs on manufactured merchandise.

The draft text, dated 6 December, is to serve as a basis for further negotiations. How to address proposals to eliminate or deeply cut tariffs on entire industrial sectors continues to divide WTO Members, wrote the chair, Swiss Ambassador Luzius Wasescha, in a foreword. Preference erosion and individual countries' requests for special treatment were also proving contentious.

Unlike previous drafts, which contained ranges of numbers, the new text includes specific formulae and figures for determining countries' future tariff levels. Wasescha said that convergence on many issues had allowed him "to present a text which is almost complete." But he stressed that the entire text remained subject to negotiation.

If the financial crisis motivated many governments to call for concluding the long-running trade talks as a boost to economic confidence, it has not been sufficient

to push them to resolve differences on some crucial issues within the negotiations.

Earlier this week, Pascal Lamy, the WTO's director-general, had to drop tentative plans to summon ministers to Geneva from 13-15 December, when it became clear that some key countries, notably the US, had little appetite for a summit, given the divisions. A ministerial meeting might still take place, from 17 December. But Lamy said that this would only happen if consultations this week demonstrate that an agreement "is more likely to fall into place than not" (see related story, this issue).

Sectorals major sticking point

The NAMA issue on which the WTO chief will be looking for "positive results" will be "sectorals," the term used by trade negotiators to refer to proposed initiatives under which participating countries would deeply cut tariffs on entire industrial sectors, such as chemicals, forest products, or industrial machinery.

To compensate for what they see as weak levels of overall tariff reduction for developing countries, industrialised nations like the US, Canada, and Japan want to be sure that major markets like China, Brazil, and India will participate in some sectoral liberalisation initiatives.

The developing countries counter that the negotiating mandate specifies that participation in such initiatives is non-mandatory. They are willing to commit to no more than a discussion of how a sectoral might work in terms of product coverage, exceptions, and future tariff levels for developed and developing countries.

Proponents of sectoral initiatives are eager to secure the participation of larger developing countries, especially for China, for two reasons. First, countries that together account for a high proportion of total world trade would need to sign on for the extra tariff cuts to kick in. Second, if a sectoral initiative managed to get off the ground without China, for example, Chinese exporters would benefit from low tariffs elsewhere without being comparably exposed to international competition.

In the foreword to the NAMA text, Wasescha wrote that "how and when to define the commitment of Members to participate in sectorals without altering the non-mandatory character of these negotiations" was an issue on which further work is required. "We are far from a consensus" on sectorals, he stressed.

The text itself contained a long paragraph, placed within square brackets to indicate the absence of agreement, that noted the conflicting objectives. The paragraph

would have countries volunteer to "negotiate the terms of sectoral tariff initiatives, with a view to making them viable." It specified, though, that "participation in the negotiation of the terms of a sectoral initiative shall not prejudice a Member's decision to participate in that sectoral initiative."

The "self-identified" countries would be listed in an annex, for which the draft text contained two options: one, favoured by sectoral proponents, would indicate "Members having announced their readiness to participate" in each of the various initiatives; the second would have one single list of "Members that agree to participate in negotiating the terms" of sectoral initiatives, without linking countries to any individual sector.

The text's provisions on sectorals did not go far enough for the US National Association of Manufacturers, which expressed opposition to calling a ministerial meeting. John Engler, president of the influential lobby group, said that "Brazil, China, and India must participate in major sectoral agreements to eliminate tariffs in sectors such as industrial machinery, chemicals, and electrical/electronics. Unfortunately, the latest text shows they are not yet willing to do this."

In the event that Members managed to agree on modalities, the text set out a schedule for how the sectoral initiatives would function, with a timeline for the negotiation of terms and a deadline for incorporating sectoral liberalisation into product-specific liberalisation commitments.

Preference erosion still complicated

On another thorny issue, preference erosion, Wasescha's text incorporated the compromise outlined by the previous NAMA chair in his report to WTO Members on the failure of a mini-ministerial meeting in July.

To soften the blow of the erosion of trade preferences that the EU and the US have long granted to some of the world's poorest countries, recent draft NAMA texts included provisions allowing each of the two economic giants to take ten years instead of five to phase in Doha Round tariff cuts on some tariff lines, primarily textiles and clothing (and also some fish products for the EU). This would at least slow the rate at which preference beneficiaries would have to confront potential displacement by more competitive exporters of the same products.

Arguing that they would be "disproportionately affected," Pakistan and Sri Lanka managed to secure an exception requiring the US and the EU to phase in tariff cuts at the regular pace on their exports of some

of those products. This spurred complaints from Asian least-developed countries like Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Nepal, which do not receive tariff-free access to the US market – and thus stood to face higher tariffs than non-LDCs Pakistan and Sri Lanka for the products covered by the exception.

The compromise in Wasescha's text, following from his predecessor Don Stephenson's August report to Members, identified five tariff lines each for Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Nepal, for which the US would phase in tariff cuts over five years instead of ten (alongside the benefits for Pakistan and Sri Lanka). Vietnam was unsuccessful in its attempt to be included in this exception-to-an-exception.

Wasescha's text specified that the products slated to receive special treatment for preference erosion would be temporarily carved out of any sectoral liberalisation initiative for the ten-year period, after which sectoral participants would have to negotiate additional tariff cuts with preference-receiving countries. China has unfavourably contrasted the US and the EU's obtainment of protection for certain textiles and clothing products with the demands it is facing for sectoral liberalisation.

Figures, not ranges, for formula and flexibilities

The recent NAMA text was the first to include specific figures, rather than ranges, for the 'coefficients' linked to the formula that will determine the future tariff levels of most major economies, and the figures governing the extent of 'flexibilities' for developing nations to shield some products from full duty cuts. The figures corresponded to those suggested by Lamy during the July mini-ministerial, which had in turn been drawn from the ranges in the earlier draft agreements put together by the previous NAMA chair.

As per the terms of the text, the industrialised country coefficient would be 8. (When fed through the so-called 'Swiss' reduction formula, all of a country's tariffs are slashed to below the value of its 'coefficient', with lower tariffs cut less sharply across the board.)

For the 30-odd developing countries that would have to apply the tariff reduction formula, there is a three-option 'sliding scale': the higher the coefficient they choose, the less freedom they have to shelter products from tariff reduction.

Developing countries opting for a coefficient of 20 would be allowed to subject 14 percent of tariff lines to cuts that are half as high as those required by the formula, covering 16 percent of manufacturing imports by value. Alternatively, they would be allowed to

exempt 6.5 percent of tariff lines from cuts altogether, accounting for 7.5 percent of import value.

A coefficient of 22 would involve 'half-formula cuts' for 10 percent of tariff lines and import value, or full exemptions for 5 percent of both.

Finally, developing countries choosing not to use the flexibilities would receive a coefficient of 25.

An 'anti-concentration' clause, designed to constrain developing countries from focusing their tariff-reduction 'flexibilities' on a limited number of industrial sectors, would require them to apply full tariff cuts to either 20 percent of tariff lines or 9 percent of import value within each chapter of the HS harmonized system used to classify products for customs purposes.

Progress on SVEs, 'Paragraph 6'

Delegates said that the text indicated the near-consensus that had been achieved on gentler tariff treatment for two de facto sub-groups of developing countries, that is, small and vulnerable economies (SVEs) and the non-LDC developing countries with binding caps on fewer than 35 percent of their industrial tariff lines (dubbed 'Paragraph 6' countries, after the relevant portion of the negotiating mandate).

Wasescha's text sets out four tiers of treatment for SVEs, depending on their existing tariff levels.

Countries accounting for less than 0.1 percent of world manufacturing trade, with a current average bound maximum allowable NAMA tariff of 50 percent or more, would be required to bind all of their non-agricultural tariff lines at an average of no more than 30 percent. SVEs with an average bound rate between 30 and 50 percent would have to bind them at an average of not more than 27 percent; those with an average between 20 to 30 percent, at no more than 18 percent. SVEs with a bound average industrial tariff of less than 20 percent would have to make 5 percent reductions to 95 percent of tariff lines (or bind NAMA tariffs at the average that would have resulted from those reductions).

SVEs include countries such as Antigua and Barbuda, Jamaica, Mongolia, and Papua New Guinea. Binding tariffs at a certain average instead of applying the standard 'Swiss' tariff reduction formula is supposed to give SVEs greater freedom to preserve protections for sectors in which they have defensive trade interests, since they can concentrate deeper tariff cuts on other products.

As for the Paragraph 6 countries, which include Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, and

Nigeria, those with binding caps on fewer than 15 percent of industrial tariff lines would have to bind 75 percent of them at an average of 30 percent. Those with binding caps on more than 15 percent of tariff lines (but less than 35 percent), would be asked to bind 80 percent of them at the same level.

Recently-acceded Members would get three extra years to implement Doha Round tariff reductions (for instance, China would have to phase in tariff cuts over thirteen years instead of ten). Wasescha's text, unlike the July 2008 revision, does not include a footnote saying that RAMs' proposals for additional flexibilities could be discussed later.

At time of writing, it remains unclear whether the new NAMA text will be seriously discussed in the foreseeable future. Lamy has not ruled out a ministerial meeting next week, and is believed to be consulting with different Member governments. But many Geneva-based trade diplomats believe that a meeting before the end of the year is increasingly unlikely.

ICTSD reporting.

REVISED AG TEXT REFLECTS PROGRESS, BUT FINAL DEAL STILL ELUSIVE

The chair of the WTO agriculture negotiations has released a revised version of his draft text, intended to serve as the basis for a deal on tariff and subsidy cuts in the Doha Round of trade negotiations. The text, along with a similar paper on industrial goods, was to be sent to trade ministers ahead of a planned high-level meeting this month, which has now been postponed (see related article, this issue).

The 6 December text and accompanying working documents reflect progress in a number of areas since the last such draft in July. In particular, it incorporates concessions made on the controversial cuts to subsidies and top-level tariffs that negotiators discussed at a ministerial meeting at that time.

These would have the US cut its overall trade-distorting subsidies by 70 percent, to roughly US\$ 14.4 billion, with the EU making cuts of 80 percent, to around 22 billion euros. However, along with other WTO Members, both would be allowed to maintain billions of dollars of 'green box' subsidies which ostensibly cause not more than minimal trade distortion, with no cap or reduction commitments on this category of payments.

Developed countries' top-level tariffs (those above 75 percent) would be subject to a 70 percent cut – although numerous opt-out clauses, such as those for developed and developing countries' 'sensitive products', are expected to mean that tariffs on key products such as beef, dairy or sugar are likely to remain high. Developing countries would have to make a 46.7 percent cut in tariffs over 130 percent.

The number of 'special products' that developing countries would be allowed to slate for gentler tariff cuts on the basis of food security, livelihood security and rural development criteria also reflect the figures discussed in July. Developing countries would be allowed to select 12 percent of tariff lines as 'special'; up to 5 percent of tariff lines could be exempt from any cuts; and the overall cut for a country's special products should be 11 percent.

The revised text and accompanying documents put forward some new suggestions on the 'special safeguard mechanism' (SSM) that developing countries can use to raise tariffs temporarily in the event of import surges and price depressions – the issue widely seen as the main stumbling block to agreement in July. However, they also revisit the issue of the permitted number of 'sensitive products' that countries will be allowed, following calls from Japan and Canada for an expanded allowance in this area.

Despite Lamy's suggestion that cotton and the SSM are the two key outstanding agriculture issues, along with sector-specific liberalisation initiatives in the industrial goods talks, many delegates acknowledged that the sensitive product issue is also critical. Fraying agreement on this question could cause the wider package to unravel, they said.

Similarly, decades-long disputes over bananas and sugar still have the potential to derail the talks. While Latin American countries seek faster and deeper liberalisation for these and other tropical products, African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group countries seek the opposite, in a bid to preserve the traditional benefits they have received through trade preferences in importing countries (primarily the EU and US). An introductory note to the text from the chair, Ambassador Crawford Falconer, admits that he is "not privy" to all the understandings between parties in this area, and so the text may not fully reflect the actual state of negotiations.

The text is also noteworthy in continuing a tendency towards country- and product- specific exceptions that was already evident in earlier drafts, with new opt-outs for a string of both developed and developing countries. Also striking are new flexibilities for net-food importing developing countries (NFIDCs), and proposed

disciplines on export restrictions, in what delegates suggested may be a bid to reflect concerns about the new high-price environment for many agricultural products that has prevailed for the last couple of years.

Special safeguard mechanism: signs of progress

A working document on the special safeguard mechanism contains Falconer's reflections on the ways forward on this issue, and reflects the progress that has been made in the informal consultations he has held with negotiators since September. The text includes new options that might allow exporters and developing country importers to move towards agreement: while the former oppose a far-reaching safeguard mechanism, the latter insist it is a vital component of an eventual Doha deal.

Particularly controversial has been the issue of when safeguards might be allowed to exceed pre-Doha ceilings, or the maximum permitted 'bound tariffs' that currently apply. The text builds on an informal proposal circulated by the EU in July that sets out a two-tiered approach for doing so: in the chair's latest text, countries would be allowed to impose heavier safeguard duties when import surges are more than 40 percent greater than average levels in the three years beforehand, and slightly lighter safeguard duties when import volumes are more than 20 percent greater.

Surges over 40 percent could be countered with safeguard duties that are half of current bound tariffs, while smaller surges over 20 percent could be addressed using safeguards that are one third of current bound tariffs. Countries would alternatively be allowed to impose safeguard duties that are 12 percentage points above existing bound tariffs in the event of a large surge that is 40 percent above average levels, or 8 percentage points more in the event of a smaller surge that is 20 percent above the average.

The safeguard options expressed as a percentage of bound tariffs are more generous than those expressed in percentage point terms, compared to previous texts and proposals, suggesting that the revised draft would provide relatively more flexibility to developing countries with high tariff barriers (such as India, which has a 70 percent bound tariff on rice), and relatively less flexibility to countries with low tariff bindings such as China (which has a 3 percent tariff on soy, for example).

The chair's working document also proposes that calculations of average import levels in the three-year base period should exclude past months in which the safeguard was applied, unless import levels were in fact above average during these months – a key exporter

demand. Importing countries nonetheless remain sceptical about the value of including this requirement.

In another new development, the text proposes various options for addressing perishable seasonable products. Countries such as Uruguay have reportedly expressed concern that safeguards could unfairly block exports of products such as fruit and vegetables. For safeguards that breach pre-Doha bindings, it also sets out various ways to limit consecutive application of the safeguard in a given time period, and to restrict the products on which safeguards are applied to 2.5 percent of tariff lines per year.

Sensitive products: a lurking iceberg?

Rumbling discontent over sensitive products could still sink the talks, delegates acknowledged. While the draft text proposes that countries be allowed to designate 4 percent of farm tariff lines as sensitive, hence slating these for gentler tariff cuts in exchange for expanded import quotas, it also notes that Canada and Japan have demanded 6 and 8 percent respectively. Negotiators have suggested that, while exporters could perhaps accommodate the Canadian demand if appropriate compensation is provided, the more far-reaching Japanese request has met with less sympathy.

Falconer proposes two options for accommodating the Canadian concerns, which would both involve compensating for the larger number of sensitive products by expanding import quotas on various sensitive product tariff lines in different ways. He notes that neither option would seem to be acceptable to Japan, however, nor have his consultations suggested "any other approach that might generate convergence."

While a special exception for Iceland, Japan, Norway and Switzerland would allow these countries to maintain tariffs at above 100 percent for products that are not designated as sensitive, Falconer's new text would now limit this to 1 percent of such tariff lines.

Exporters have expressed concern that their market access gains from the Doha Round could be severely curtailed if importing Members are allowed substantial flexibility on sensitive products. Expanded import quotas would not provide the same level of dependable access to markets, they warn.

Bananas and sugar: developing countries remain divided

Latin American exporters have warned that the provisional bananas deal that they struck with the EU in July cannot be reopened, and that it must be agreed as a stand-alone deal, rather than as part of the Doha

Round. The deal would have the EU cut its MFN tariff on bananas to 114 euros per tonne by the start of 2016, with a 28 euro per tonne 'down payment' cut in the first year (See Bridges Daily Updates, 28 July 2008, <http://ictsd.net/i/wto/englishupdates/14789/>).

Reportedly, the EU has asked to be allowed a longer timetable for implementing tariff cuts, which exporters have rejected.

The Latin American group also opposes allowing sugar to benefit from additional flexibility as both a sensitive product and a product on the list of commodities that would be affected by preference erosion. A recent informal paper by Guatemala and Colombia opposes granting 'double dip flexibility' to products in this way. The ACP group remains opposed to the proposed approach for these two products; however, one delegate suggested that EU aid to address adjustment challenges for these products would also be important as part of an overall Doha package.

TRQ creation: possible compromise in sight?

Exporters have vehemently opposed allowing importers to create new quotas for sensitive products – something that importers say they need in order to be able to accept the broader deal. The new text would limit the number of such new quotas to 1 percent of tariff lines for any Member (except Norway, which is accorded special treatment); include expanded import quotas, beyond what would otherwise be required for sensitive products; allow zero in-quota tariff rates; and provide that the amount of increased access will be clearly specified at the tariff-line level when Members agreed on 'modalities' – the formulae and figures for tariff and subsidy cuts, and exceptions to these.

Tariff simplification: a gradual approach

Exporters and importers have also fought over the extent to which specific tariffs – expressed as a unit value rather than a percentage – should be converted into ad valorem equivalents, with the former group of countries seeking rapid and complete conversion of all tariff lines to simplified forms. While a methodology for tariff simplification has been agreed, high prices for farm goods have subsequently diminished the potential gains from simplification.

Exporters have recently tabled compromise proposals that would allow importers to maintain complex tariffs until price decreases mean that the tariffs charged to importers would in fact decrease when tariffs are converted to the simpler format. Falconer draws on these proposals in his recent text, which sets out a phased timetable for simplification, and with the possibility of some tariffs being left in their more complex form at the end. The new text also includes an

opt-out clause that could allow the EU to convert only 85 percent of tariffs to ad valorem equivalents, compared with 90 percent for all other Members.

In-quota tariffs: text becomes simpler and clearer

Developed countries will have to reduce in-quota tariffs by 50 percent, or to a ten percent threshold, on the same time-frame as quota expansions. A new requirement stipulates that the maximum in-quota tariff on day one of the implementation period is 17.5 percent. If tariffs are below 5 percent, they must be reduced to zero by the end of the first year of the implementation period – although Switzerland is granted a special exception to this rule for four particular tariff lines. Developing countries, and those classed as small vulnerable economies or recently-accessed Members, are given special treatment, with gentler cuts on in-quota tariffs and additional flexibilities for special products.

Special Agricultural Safeguard (SSG): reduced coverage, and a seven-year phase-out

The SSG, which has been used primarily by developed countries since the end of the Uruguay Round, will be phased out after seven years. Exporters had wanted it eliminated immediately, but importing countries had insisted that it be maintained. The text proposes that the SSG apply only to one percent of tariff lines during the implementation period, with particular requirements for sensitive products and in-quota tariffs.

Cotton: the great unknown

WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy has written to delegates underscoring that progress on cotton is a prerequisite for the planned mini-ministerial meeting. However, delegates remain in the dark about possible US concessions on cotton subsidies – still the missing piece in the jigsaw. In the absence of counter-proposals, the text still reflects the cuts put forward by the 'cotton 4' African producers (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali). Some trade sources have suggested, however, that recent Democratic victories in the US congressional and presidential elections may leave the US more room to manoeuvre on this issue, given that the cotton-producing states tend to favour heavily the Republicans.

Special and differential treatment for developed countries?

The new draft is notable for the number of country-specific exceptions and opt-out clauses it now contains. In addition to the proposed exceptions described above for the EU, Japan, Switzerland and Norway, the draft already includes a country-specific base period for

calculating reductions for US 'blue box' subsidies, leading one Member to query whether it effectively provides 'special and differential treatment for developed countries'.

However, the draft also provides country-specific exclusions for a number of developing countries as well. The latest revision contains specific arrangements for Cuba, Suriname and Venezuela, amongst others; exclusions for the latter country, which is allowed to undertake lower tariff cuts if the overall average would otherwise exceed 30 percent, have reportedly provoked concern amongst neighbouring Paraguay and Uruguay, who fear that they may lose market access opportunities as a result.

Looking forward

While one delegate voiced fears that the draft agriculture deal could not easily be 'reheated' if Members failed to reach agreement now, most others emphasised the need to move forward with caution. "One failure this year is enough!" said one, in a reference to the breakdown of ministerial level talks in July. Members should instead build on the progress that has been made and seek to bridge the remaining gaps, before convening ministers for a final bid to clinch the deal, many said.

ICTSD reporting.

OBAMA TO PICK BECERRA FOR TOP TRADE POST, OFFICIALS SAY

Congressman Xavier Becerra, who has called US trade policy "broken completely" and said that he regrets having voted for the North American Free Trade Agreement, will be US President-elect Barack Obama's choice for the country's trade chief, media sources reported last week.

Xavier Becerra, a Democratic Congressman from California who has spent nearly 16 years on Capitol Hill, reportedly met with Obama in Chicago last Thursday to discuss the post of US trade representative (USTR). No official statements have been made, but Democratic officials speaking on the condition of anonymity have confirmed that Becerra has been offered the position, Bloomberg reported.

Becerra - the son of immigrants and the first in his family to graduate from college - is considered a rising star of the Democratic Party. The first Latino member of the House of Representatives' Ways and Means Committee, which deals with trade, Becerra has earned a reputation for fighting hard for workers' rights and working well with Republican rivals.

If he takes the cabinet-level USTR post, then Becerra's responsibilities would include negotiating bilateral, regional and multilateral trade deals, as well as coordinating trade policy among the many governmental agencies that have a stake in the issue. The post could be an influential one in the Obama administration, as the president-elect has indicated that he intends to re-negotiate portions of the NAFTA and take a harder line on workers' rights and the environment in all new trade deals (see Bridges Weekly, 5 November 2008, <http://ictsd.net/i/news/bridgesweekly/32652/>).

The approach that Becerra would take as USTR remains to be seen, but the votes he has cast since he joined Congress in early 1993 provide some clues as to the kind of stance he might take in handling the country's trade policies.

Becerra's voting record in the House of Representatives has earned him 100-percent approval ratings from both the AFL-CIO, the largest workers' union in the United States, and the National Farmers Union. The US Chamber of Commerce, which represents business groups, has given him an approval rating of just 14 percent.

In an editorial titled "Becerra's a bad choice for trade post," the Los Angeles Times - the Congressman's hometown newspaper - described him as a "dyed-in-the-wool protectionist" and said that, for the sake of the US economy, they "deeply hope" that Becerra will turn down Obama's offer.

But the nine-term Congressman's voting record on trade is somewhat mixed. He voted in favour of NAFTA shortly after he arrived in Washington in 1993, but he later said that he regretted that decision. And he now opposes the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) on the grounds that the deal lacks sufficient labour and environmental standards, among other concerns.

But Becerra has shown that he does not simply take a hard line on all trade issues. He joined a minority of Democrats in voting in favour of normalising trade relations with China in 2000 and backed a bilateral trade pact with Chile three years later. He also supported the US' trade deal with Peru, which Congress approved last year, after Democratic leaders successfully negotiated stricter environment and labour standards into the agreement (see Bridges Weekly, 16 May 2007, <http://ictsd.net/i/news/bridgesweekly/7751/>).

His support of that agreement was somewhat qualified, though, as he explained in a speech to fellow lawmakers in November 2007:

"In this deal, while it is not perfect, we find improvements were made that for the first time in the history of this Congress will give us a chance to vote on something that says that we will treat workers as well as we treat widgets," he said. "For me, that makes this deal worth voting for because while we would like to do much better, the perfect should not get in the way of making progress."

But Becerra has not always sounded such a positive note on US trade policy. Two years ago, while lambasting the then-proposed (and later enacted) US free trade agreement with Oman, he took the opportunity to blast Washington's general approach to trade deals:

"I hate to say it, but I think it's become very obvious that our system for devising trade agreements so very important to this country's functioning around the world, has not only broken, but is broken completely," Becerra said in a speech on the floor of the House in 2006. "And even though we know in most cases, many of the countries, including Oman, do not have laws that protect their workers, which will mean that our workers will suffer as well, we continue to move forward with these agreements," he said.

"It is time for a change. We need a new direction when it comes to our trade policy. Not only for our workers, but for the health of our American companies that have to compete in this world where artificially other companies and other countries are gaining advantage over us because they are not following the rules," he said.

The Obama transition team has not said when it will announce its USTR selection. If appointed to the post and approved by the Senate, Becerra would be the second Latino member of Obama's cabinet. New Mexico governor Bill Richardson was named the administration's Secretary of Commerce last week.

ICTSD reporting; "Becerra's a bad choice for trade post," LA TIMES, 5 December 2008; "Becerra said to be offered top US trade position," BLOOMBERG, 3 December 2008.

IN BRIEF

EU: 16 DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO RECEIVE GSP+ MARKET ACCESS BENEFITS

The European Union has granted preferential tariff rates to 16 developing countries that meet its criteria for

sustainable development and good governance, Brussels announced Tuesday.

The preferences, dubbed GSP+, are in addition to the standard Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) the EU extends to developing countries. Under the standard GSP, preferential access to the EU market is provided to 176 developing countries and territories in the form of reduced tariffs on around 6400 goods when entering the EU market, with no expectation of reciprocal treatment.

With the GSP+ programme, Brussels offers additional tariff reductions to support vulnerable developing countries that have ratified and effectively implemented 27 key international conventions in such fields as human rights, labour standards, sustainable development and good governance. The current GSP+ scheme, which was begun in 2006, expires at the end of the year.

"GSP+ is at the heart of our pro-development trade policy. The decision today ensures that sustainable development and good governance will continue to be rewarded," EU Trade Commissioner Catherine Ashton said in a statement.

The EU found that 16 countries met the eligibility criteria and granted them GSP+ preferential treatment for the period 2009 to 2011. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Paraguay will receive the benefits for the first time beginning in January. Countries whose GSP+ benefits will continue in the next period include Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Georgia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Peru, Sri Lanka and Venezuela.

But Panama, a previous recipient, will miss out on the preferential treatment because its application was not submitted by Brussels' due date, the end of October. Additionally, the preferential treatment extended to El Salvador and Sri Lanka is contingent on current investigations into their effective implementation of certain UN and International Labour Organisation conventions. "Depending on the findings, they could be withdrawn from the scheme," Brussels said.

According to Brussels, in 2007 there was 4.7 billion euros' worth of trade under the programme. The nominal duty loss for the EU was more than 357 million euros, compared to that under the standard GSP. Tariff reductions beyond that of the standard GSP scheme include, among others, cuts of up to 52 percent on tobacco, up to 30 percent on various fruit juices, and up to 20 percent on fruits and fish.

The EU also offers an Everything But Arms (EBA) arrangement, which provides duty-free, quota-free

access for all products for 50 least developed countries on 7200 tariff lines.

ICTSD reporting; "EU grants preferential tariff rates to 11 Latin American countries," XINHUA, 9 December 2008; "EU grants GSP + trade status to 16 countries," REUTERS, 9 December 2008.

US, CHINA WORK TOGETHER TO AID GLOBAL TRADE

The US and China will provide US\$ 20 billion in loans to finance trade in a coordinated effort to help ease the economic crisis. The agreement was made with developing countries in mind, and "to contain and curb the spread of the financial contagion and avoid a global recession," according to Chinese Vice Premier Wang Qishan.

The plan came from the fifth round of the Strategic Economic Dialogue between the US and China, which have held biannual meetings since 2006. This meeting was the final economic talk between the two before the inauguration of US president-elect Barack Obama, and the last time that Henry Paulson, a Chinese favourite, represented the US as Treasury Secretary.

"At this time of unpredictability in our world, high-level engagement with China must be a constant," said Max Baucus, chairman of the US Senate Finance Committee, in an appeal to Obama to continue the talks.

"A better dialogue will be one that addresses agriculture trade problems, like China's beef ban, as well as goods and services trade," Baucus added.

Chinese economic stimulus plans further incorporated a provision that would temporarily permit local arms of foreign banks to receive loans from affiliates abroad in order to increase their cash on hand. And both nations reiterated promises to resist protectionism.

The meeting also established seven accords to promote cooperation on projects to promote energy and environmental conservation. The two nations are the world's biggest polluters.

China topped Japan as the largest foreign holder of US bonds in September, and the current crisis has only served to underscore the close economic connection between the nations.

"The ground has shifted on both sides of the Pacific and it has become more important than ever for these two

economies to get their bilateral relationship strait," said Eswar Prasad of the Brookings institution.

But though both sides praised the accomplishments of the meeting, there were many criticisms as well, often stemming from the current financial crisis.

Paulson urged China to let the yuan appreciate-not a surprising request considering the widespread criticism that Beijing has been purposefully devaluing its currency. But China may face obstacles in achieving this goal. Many exporters in China may blame Beijing for weaker business sales if they allow the yuan to strengthen, according to Paulson.

But Beijing had a few requests of its own. China's central bank governor, Zhou Xiaochuan, said that US financial excesses were to blame for the current financial crisis, and Wang said that the US should work to stabilise its own economic problems, including excessive consumption and debt. Analysts say that such comments reflect China's growing influence and assertiveness in the economic relationship between the two giants.

According to Donald Straszheim of Straszheim Global Advisors, the agreements were "probably really just a favour [from the Chinese] to secretary Paulson... to give him something that he's accomplished near the end of his term. To expect any real substantive breakthrough at a time like this, when it's Bush officials on the way out rather than Obama officials on the way in, is unrealistic."

Indeed, Zhou wasn't even in town for the meeting. Instead, he opted to meet with Timothy Geitner, the Obama administration's pick for Treasury Secretary.

ICTSD reporting; "US, China Promise \$20 billion to finance trade," ASSOCIATED PRESS, December 5, 2008; "A Mixed Ending for Paulson in China," WALL STREET JOURNAL, December 5, 2008; "China, US promise \$20 billion for trade," ASSOCIATED PRESS, December 5, 2008; "China, US deepen Financial Ties, Aid Global Trade," BLOOMBERG, December 5, 2008; "China, US, Vow to Work Together to Help Global Economy," VOICE OF AMERICA, December 5, 2008.

WTO IN BRIEF

SLOW MOVEMENT ON IP ISSUES AS EU CLARIFIES GI PROPOSAL

Delegates made progress on intellectual property issues at a TRIPS Council meeting on 5 December,

narrowing but not eliminating differences that, if unresolved, risk scuppering the agreement of a global trade deal at the WTO.

This was “a significantly better discussion than yesterday” the chair of the talks, Trevor Clarke of Barbados, said, comparing the session to a 4 December meeting that got mired down in debate over procedural issues.

At issue are three topics on which talks have largely stalled since the launch of the Doha Round in 2001, namely: extending to all products the stronger protection currently accorded to geographical indications of wines and spirits (GI extension); making it mandatory for patent applicants to disclose the origin of any genetic resources or associated traditional knowledge involved in their inventions; and the establishment of a register for geographical indications (GIs) of wines and spirits.

The majority of the afternoon meeting on 5 December was taken up by the EU’s response to 60 questions that had been put forward regarding its proposal for a GI register for wines and spirits.

According to the text of the proposal that the EU and its allies on the matter submitted in July, Member states “shall provide that” their domestic authorities “consult the register and take its information into account.” Importantly, the text also stated that, “in the absence of proof to the contrary,” the very fact that a product is listed on the register will be considered “prima facie evidence that it meets the definition of ‘geographical indication’.”

Historically, the main points of disagreement have been over participation in the register and the consequences and legal effects of registration. Members such as the EU want all WTO Members to participate. But others, including Argentina, Australia, Canada, and the US, argue that participation in the system should be voluntary. These countries and other opponents of the EU position, have put forward an alternative ‘joint proposal’ that would simply require or urge countries to consult the register.

The European delegates responded to questions regarding the participation of Member states, the consequences and legal effects of registration, the notification and registration of new GIs, as well as the costs and the particular challenges that developing countries would face in participating.

Ecuador, India and Switzerland indicated their support of the EU proposal, while Argentina, Australia, Canada, Chile, El Salvador, Japan, Taiwan and the US questioned the proposal.

At the 4 December meeting, a large number of countries - including the EU, the African group, Brazil, China, Colombia, India and Switzerland - urged delegates to discuss all three of the contentious IP issues in parallel, echoing the call they made in May for the IP issues to be included “as part of the horizontal process” of negotiations towards agreements to liberalise trade in the agricultural and industrial sectors in the Doha Round talks.

But that position has been strongly rebuffed by Australia, Canada, Mexico, New Zealand, South Korea, and the US, among others, who rejected “the artificial parallelism” of linking the three intellectual property matters.

“Each of the TRIPS issues...has its own terms of reference, and particular subject matter,” the dissenting countries argued in July. “The extent and interest of Members in the content and potential outcomes for each issue varies considerably.”

ICTSD reporting.

LAMY: REVIEW MECHANISM CAN IMPROVE ACCESS TO MEDICINES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

WTO Members unhappy with the relationship between intellectual property rights and developing countries’ access to medicines should use an annual review mechanism to improve the system that governs those issues, the organisation’s Director-General Pascal Lamy said on Tuesday.

All WTO agreements since the 1947 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade have recognised that public health is a right, and not a mere commodity to be traded. Thus, WTO Members are allowed to give priority to health policies even if doing so could lead to trade restrictions.

But despite this recognition, critics highlight that patents, which are protected under the 1994 Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, or TRIPS, are a deterrent to the effective access of critical medicines for the poor, particularly in developing countries.

Lamy noted the fine balance between protecting intellectual property rights as an “incentive for the development of new medicines” and at the same time addressing potential price impacts patents may have on medicine.

This balance of protecting property rights and ensuring access to affordable medicines was addressed in the '2003 decision' at the WTO, in which Members agreed to waive provisions under the WTO's TRIPS Agreement so that countries could legally export generic drugs produced without the patent-holders' consent to developing countries that are unable to produce pharmaceuticals themselves. The decision was the result of a 2001 declaration on TRIPS and public health that promised an "expeditious" solution to the problem.

But the cumbersome nature of the system has come under fire. Indeed, the waiver was used for the first time ever this September, when generic medicines were shipped from Canada to treat HIV/AIDS patients in Rwanda (see Bridges Weekly, 25 September 2008, <http://ictsd.net/i/news/bridgesweekly/29778/>).

Although the Canadian programme was praised for strengthening poor governments' hands in negotiating drug purchase prices, others say that the approval process proved so complicated that it discouraged drug makers from taking part. Even Apotex, the drug maker involved in the Canadian deal, has said that it will not go through the complicated and costly process again unless the regulations are amended.

In light of this discontent, Lamy, speaking on Tuesday to the 11th Annual International Generic Pharmaceutical Alliance Conference, drew attention to the system's periodic review. The 2003 Decision also required the TRIPS Council to annually review the functioning and effectiveness of the system. But, "I would note that WTO members did not raise concerns during the last annual review of the operation system," Lamy said.

"Just like any WTO agreement, [the decision] should be periodically reviewed and lessons drawn from these evaluations so that the WTO can continue its effort to make it work as a contribution among others to enhancing access to medicines," he said.

But while the "issue of TRIPS and public health is certainly one of the most emotive and, consequently, frequently debated issues," Lamy pointed out, intellectual property rules constitute only one of a myriad of interrelating factors that determine the level of access to medicines by patients in a given country. Adequate infrastructure, national health systems, and the transparency and efficiency of the procurement regimes are among the factors that play a role, he said.

Lamy also touched upon the concern that 'TRIPS plus' provisions, negotiated as part of some free trade agreements, may impact access to medicines under the multilateral framework. The best the WTO can do, Lamy said, is monitor the content and development of

such agreements, until the Membership suggests action on the subject.

Overall, "international trade helps improve the health conditions of many people," Lamy said.

ICTSD reporting; "Lamy challenges discontented WTO Members to use TRIPS public health review," IP WATCH, 9 December 2008.

HIGH FOOD PRICES WILL CONTINUE TO HURT POOR COUNTRIES, WTO AG COMMITTEE HEARS

Agricultural prices remain high despite recent drops and are likely to exacerbate nutritional and economic problems in poor and developing countries that are net-food importers, a meeting of the WTO's regular Agriculture Committee heard on 4 December.

The meeting's discussion on the relationship between WTO rules and national food security was driven by a statement by least developed countries (LDCs) and reports that were presented by international organisation's which are observers to the Agriculture Committee - including the International Grains Council, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

Tanzania, on behalf of the LDCs, warned that some countries "have already been hard hit by violent public protests that have often resulted in serious casualties."

Such concerns were supported by the findings of the international organisations present. Although the FAO's food price index is now lower than it has been in nine months, it is still 51 percent above where it was in September 2006, the FAO noted. As such, LDCs and developing countries that are net food importers face an import bill of US\$ 22.2 billion for the period 2007 to 2008 - a 125 percent jump from five years ago.

And the FAO said the food import bill is likely to remain high. High grain costs, increasing freight costs, declining volumes of food aid, and the need to import more to replenish stocks were among the reasons FAO cited.

The IMF cautioned that fluctuating food prices "weakened macroeconomic fundamentals in many countries, leaving them more susceptible to financial contagion and the consequent slowdown in global growth."

Likewise, UNCTAD called the situation a wake-up call, but one that “can be turned into an opportunity by developing countries and the international community to revitalise global agriculture production and trade.” In particular, UNCTAD suggested that the ongoing Doha Round of international trade talks at the WTO “could be a major step to reform the agriculture trading system” by producing fair rules and supporting developing countries.

Possible responses to the situation were also considered at the meeting. These comprised action by LDCs and net food importers to increase their own assistance and improve farming productivity, as well as action by the international community in reforming disciplines on tariffs, subsidies and food aid as part of an eventual Doha Round deal.

In addition to discussing implementation of the Agriculture Agreement, the committee also considered three Doha problems that developing countries face in the implementation of the present agreement. These included export credit and financing, tariff quota administration, and improving the effectiveness of work under the net-food importing countries decision.

The regular Agriculture Committee handles with routine elements of the WTO, and not the agriculture ‘special sessions’ of the Doha talks.

ICTSD reporting.

US ‘ZEROING’ PRACTICE CHALLENGED AT WTO, AGAIN, THIS TIME BY BRAZIL, THAILAND

Brazil and Thailand both initiated WTO consultations at the end of November over a contentious method that the US uses to calculate the extent of trade violations.

Central to both cases is the use by the US of ‘zeroing’, a controversial method of determining whether and by how much trading partners are ‘dumping’ (exporting at artificially low prices) their goods in the US market. Under this calculation, US trade authorities ignore, or ‘zero out’, instances in which goods command higher prices in US markets than abroad.

WTO rules permit countries that receive dumped goods to retaliate with anti-dumping measures, which usually come in the form of higher tariffs, against the offending country. But critics argue the zeroing method overstates the amount by which goods are being dumped and allows injured US companies to secure inappropriately high levels of anti-dumping duties on competing imports.

While Brazil is concerned with US antidumping calculations on its orange juice, Thailand has requested consultations regarding polyethylene retail carrier bags. According to the Brazilian Ministry of External Relations, the US calculated “dumping margins of up to 4.81 percent” in the US market for the period between August 2005 and February 2007. But Brasília said that the US’ use of zeroing had “artificially inflated” those margins.

The consultation request “reflects the perception that the ‘zeroing’ practice, in addition to being inconsistent with multilateral trade rules, is cause for great uncertainty and serious damage to the affected export companies,” the Brazilian statement said.

Likewise, in the Thai WTO communication, Bangkok said the effect of the zeroing practice “was to create artificially margins of dumping where none would otherwise have been found, or at a minimum, to inflate margins of dumping.”

Past WTO dispute panels as well as the Appellate Body have repeatedly ruled against the practice. But the US has not yet changed its internal procedures and continues to apply the zeroing calculation of dumping margins saying that WTO courts have exceeded their authority.

ICTSD reporting; “Brazil, Thailand challenge U.S. import measures,” REUTERS, 2 December 2008.

EVENTS & RESOURCES

EVENTS

For a more comprehensive list of events in trade and sustainable development, please refer to ICTSD’s web calendar at: <http://www.ictsd.org/cal/index.htm>. If you would like to submit an event, please email events@ictsd.ch.

Coming up: 11-17 December

11 December, Washington DC, US. THE WORLD BANK, THE FINANCIAL CRISIS AND THE TRADE AGENDA LOOKING FORWARD. The ongoing global financial crisis and economic slowdown has important consequences for world trade, which is expected to decline for the first time since the early 1980s. The Director of the World Bank’s international trade program will survey this rapidly changing situation and discuss how the World Bank Group and others are responding. This session will examine a number of issues: How is the World Bank Group responding to the global finance crisis through trade facilitation initiatives? How will exports from developing countries be affected by the higher cost of trade finance as well as reductions in demand? How will governments worldwide respond to pressure to increase subsidies in some countries and adjust trade policies in

others? What actions are required to maintain the supply of trade finance and to resist pressures for protectionist responses? Can multilateral cooperation bring the Doha round to a successful close in the near future and delivering on Aid for Trade commitments in the current environment? For further information, please refer to http://www.wita.org/index.php?tg=addon/4/form&id_app=25&rt_step=163.

11 December, San Salvador, El Salvador. FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE ENERGY FOR CENTRAL AND NORTH AMERICA. This Forum's main objective is to increase the sustainability of the energy sector by strengthening the collaboration and cooperation between the countries in Central and North America. The dialogue will be focused around the policies and mechanisms needed to catalyse the use and development of sustainable energy in this area, including such themes as renewable energy, market policies and sharing of experience in the use and deployment of advanced technologies. The Forum will be followed by a private sector seminar titled, Energy in Central America: Renewable Energy, Integration and Investments. For information on the seminar please visit the following website <http://www.iamericas.org/energy/events/central-america-energy-renewables-integration-and-investment.html>. For further information, please refer to <http://www.oas.org/dsd/reia/MeetingSICA.htm>.

15 December, Geneva, Switzerland. SYMPOSIUM ON PUBLIC SECTOR IP MANAGEMENT IN THE LIFE SCIENCES. Organised by the World Intellectual Property Organisation. Public research institutions account for a significant share of the research undertaken in the life sciences. Public funds also support a large amount of life sciences research by others. Given the direct public interest in this research and its results, coherent intellectual property (IP) strategies and policies will help to ensure that benefits from new technologies resulting from these investments, for instance in fields such as public health, agriculture and the environment, flow to the public. This symposium will explore different national approaches, institutional policies and public-private partnerships, with a view to learning from practical experience. It will provide a forum for informal discussion on these themes with the aim of reviewing the central issues in public sector IP management in the life sciences. The event is open to the general public and is free-of-charge. For further information, please refer to http://www.wipo.int/meetings/en/2008/lifesciences/ip_iss3_ge/.

15-17 December, Sirte, Libya. FAO HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON WATER FOR AGRICULTURE AND ENERGY IN AFRICA: THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE. The purpose of this conference will be to address the availability of water resources in Africa under the circumstances of increased demand by the agricultural and energy sectors and in the context of changing climatic conditions. The conference will analyse the present situation and needs, in terms of water for agriculture and energy, and the potential, the costs and the sources of financing, with a view to proposing to heads of state and governments the policies, strategies and programmes for effective use and management of water resources. For further information,

please refer to <http://www.fao.org/nr/water/events.html> or <http://www.fao.org/nr/water/docs/sirteconceptnote.pdf>.

16-19 December, Bangkok, Thailand. UNCTAD-ASEAN Symposium on Flexibilities in International Intellectual Property Rules and Local Production of Medicines. Responding to the new mandate received from members at the Ministerial Conference in Accra, as well as a World Health Assembly resolution on a Global Strategy and Plan of Action on Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Department of Intellectual Property of the Government of Thailand are organising this capacity-building workshop. The workshop examines the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement obligations and flexibilities available to developing countries, and the least developed countries in particular, that can support the local production of generic pharmaceuticals. For further information, please refer to <http://www.unctad.org/Templates/Meeting.asp?intItemID=2068&lang=1&m=16582&year=2008&month=12>.

18 December, Brussels, Belgium. FRENCH-GERMAN ENERGY RELATIONS IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT: STILL POWERING EUROPE? This seminar is part of the Ifri Energy Breakfast Roundtable, and includes Hinrich Thoenen, Economy Adviser, Embassy of Germany in France, Christophe Schramm, French Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development, Jan Horst Keppler, Professor in Economics, University Paris-Dauphine and Fellow Research associated with the Energy Programme at Ifri, Kristina Notz, Research Fellow at Center for Applied Policy Research. For further information, please refer to http://www.ifri.org/frontDispatcher/ifri/manifestations/s_miniaire_1033636016876/publi_P_energie_mar_s_12223305_55835.

WTO Events

An updated list of forthcoming WTO meetings is posted http://www.wto.org/meets_public/meets_e.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.

11 December: DISPUTE SETTLEMENT BODY

11 December: WORKING PARTY ON THE ACCESSION OF AZERBAIJAN

15+17 December: TRADE POLICY REVIEW BODY - SWITZERLAND/LIECHTENSTEIN

15 December: TRADE NEGOTIATIONS COMMITTEE

Other Upcoming Events

19-20 December, Paris, France. SIXTH WORLD FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: PRIORITIES, FINANCING,

GOVERNANCE. Launched in 2003, the Global Sustainability Forum provides an annual meeting for decision-makers and managers from the worlds of business, politics, education and the non-profit sector in the French-speaking world, with strong links to Asia, the US and Latin America. This annual event is intended to bridge the gap between the World Economic Forum of Davos and the alter-globalisation of Porto Alegre. For further information, please refer to <http://www.fmdd.fr/synopsis.html>.

26-27 January, Bonn, Germany. FOUNDING CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY AGENCY (IRENA). A successful preparation process has paved the way to the establishment of the International Renewable Energy Agency, or IRENA. All United Nations member states are invited to sign the Treaty (Statute) at the Conference establishing IRENA, on 26 January next year in Germany. From that day forth, the Statute will be ready for signature by any states interested in becoming a member of the Agency. For more information contact: e-mail: info@irena.org; Internet: <http://www.irena.org/index.htm>.

4-15 May, New York, US. SEVENTEENTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. This policy session will focus on agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa. For more information, please refer to <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd>.

RESOURCES

LOOKING BEYOND DOHA? NEW THINKING ON TRADE POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT. By Socialist Group in the European Parliament, December 2008. This booklet examines the link between development and trade by focusing on the future of the World Trade Organisation beyond the Doha Round of trade talks. In particular, contributions to the emerging debate on post-Doha prospects are made by Javier Moreno Sanchez a Socialist Group member of the European Parliament, Linda Sánchez a Democrat member of the US House of Representatives, Romain Benicchio of OXFAM International, and Timothy Wise and Kevin Gallagher from Tufts University in the US. To access this paper, please refer to http://www.ase.tufts.edu/gdae/Pubs/rp/PSE_PuttingDevInWTODec08.pdf.

THE IMPLEMENTATION GAME: THE TRIPS AGREEMENT AND THE GLOBAL POLITICS OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY REFORM IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. By Carolyn Deere, Oxford University Press, December 2008. The 'Implementation Game' is the first book-length study of the politics surrounding the implementation of the World Trade Organisation's Agreement on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). It seeks to explain the variation in how developing countries have implemented the treaty, highlighting the influence of global intellectual property debates, international pressures, and political dynamics within developing countries. In so doing, the book exposes how power politics occur not just within global trade talks but afterward when countries implement agreements. 'The Implementation Game' will be of interest to all those engaged in debates on the global governance of trade and intellectual

property, and the challenges facing developing countries in the global economy. For further information, please refer to <http://www.oup.com/uk/catalogue/?ci=9780199550616>.

2008 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE WTO. World Trade Organisation, November 2008. The World Trade Organisation's (WTO) 2008 Annual Report focuses on the activities of the organisation in 2007 and details its current structure, staff and budget. It includes detailed progress reports on various aspects of the Doha negotiations and an overview of some of the main developments within the WTO. To access this report, please refer to http://onlinebookshop.wto.org/shop/article_details.asp?Id_Article=748.

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