



Bridges Weekly Trade News Digest

Weekly trade news from a sustainable development perspective

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LEAD STORIES

All Eyes on US Ahead of High-Level Doha Meeting

The Doha Round of global trade talks has been moribund for almost two years. In an attempt to revive it, different groups of WTO members are meeting to explore possible ways forward.

Senior officials from five influential member governments – the US, the EU, China, Brazil, and India – met in Paris in late April to examine the state of the struggling WTO talks. That meeting has inspired another, broader, gathering that involving 19 countries, to be hosted by the EU and India at the former's mission in Geneva from 19-20 May.

It remains unclear whether governments will be able to overcome substantial differences in opinion on what a multilateral trade deal should look like. These divisions have caused the negotiations to stumble from one breakdown to another since they were launched in late 2001.

Michael Punke, the new US ambassador to the WTO, believes that having member governments meet in a “constellation of [different] configurations” could help them bridge these divides.

Speaking to reporters on Monday, Punke made no secret about what he thought was needed for a Doha deal: more market opening by large developing countries such as Brazil, China and India.

“At the end of the day, the success or failure of the Doha Round comes down to a very simple question,” he said. “Are advanced developing economies like India, China, and Brazil, ready to accept the responsibility and leadership that goes along with their new position in the global

economy? If they are... we will have a successful outcome to the round. If they are not... we will not have a successful outcome to the round.”

The new US ambassador, whose arrival in Geneva was held up by Congressional Republicans for several months, expressed irritation with the notion that Washington had not made it clear exactly what it was seeking.

The Indians, Brazilians and Chinese were “intimately familiar” with the United States’ objectives, Punke said. In the industrial goods negotiations, the US wanted tariff cuts for “priority sectors” such as chemicals, electrical equipment, and forest products. In the agriculture talks, Washington wanted to ensure that flexibilities for developing countries would not create loopholes that undermine market access. In particular, it did not want the ‘special safeguard mechanism’ to allow developing countries to temporarily raise agricultural tariffs beyond their pre-Doha bound ceiling rates in the event of import surges or price collapses in order to protect farmers. As for services trade, he said that advanced developing countries should commit to opening their markets to foreign competition in sectors such as computer services and express delivery.

According to Punke, talk of US concessions in return for these gains is premature, at the very least, since the formulas and figures for tariff and subsidy cuts in the draft agreement texts dating back to 2008 are tilted unfairly against the US. “It’s ironic to me to talk about a starting point of additional US concessions when it’s our premise that the round is currently imbalanced and that balance needs to be improved.”

Punke’s views, including his rejection of the parameters that came close to forming the basis of a WTO agreement in July 2008, matched those expressed by top US trade officials in the past two years, irrespective of administration.

In the markets that the US is targeting, perceptions are rather different.

“We reject outright” the claim that the round is currently imbalanced against the US, said a Brazilian source, noting that such an outcome

seemed implausible given the US’ active involvement in the talks since their inception.

The source said that Washington’s approach – outlining specific demands but not concessions it was willing to make in return – was “not realistic.” Also unrealistic were Washington’s demands for far-reaching market-opening across a significant range of sectors; US trading partners might have tried to accommodate them on a small number of specific issues.

“You can ask for whatever you want, but if you don’t say what you’re going to do in return, it means little. I want a Porsche,” the source laughed, “but do I have the money for it?”

The source, who was speaking under condition of anonymity, noted that in the sectors where the Washington was seeking additional access, such as chemicals and electronics, Brazil was already slated to make more of a tariff cutting effort than the US. “The US looks at sectors in which they [already] have low tariffs and says ‘Oh, let’s all have low tariffs here.’ This is not how it works.”

In contrast, when Brazil asked the US for concessions on agricultural tariffs, subsidies, and quotas, including for ethanol, US officials would refuse, saying that it was difficult.

Asked whether there was simply a fundamental mismatch among WTO members’ views on what constitute a balanced outcome to the Doha Round, the US ambassador acknowledged that there were “significant gaps,” but said that “real negotiations” could narrow them.

Putting faith in new deadlines or big ministerial meetings would not work, Punke argued. The only way to move the talks forward was “hard work in multiple configurations” – multilateral, plurilateral, and bilateral. He said that in the more than thirty bilateral meetings he had held since his arrival in Geneva last month, his interlocutors agreed on the necessity of sitting down to talk in different groups (what trade negotiators call “variable geometries”).

Trade negotiators tend to believe that small, informal meetings enable a more open exchange

instead of the traditional repetition of well-worn talking points.

Punke, who repeatedly stressed that he was authorised to negotiate and willing to talk, will have an opportunity to exchange views informally with a larger group of countries at a 19-20 May meeting co-hosted by the EU and India.

At time of writing, participants were expected to include the US, the EU, Brazil, China, India, Argentina, Australia, Barbados, Burkina Faso, Canada, Egypt, Gabon, Indonesia, Japan, Mauritius, Mexico, Switzerland South Africa, and Zambia.

Sources say that the upcoming meeting is likely to focus on how to take the negotiating process forward, rather than serve as a forum for negotiating market access. At best, countries might make general remarks about whether they would be prepared to make additional concessions.

ICTSD reporting.

OTHER NEWS

EU Farm Subsidies More Skewed than Ever: Report

More than 1,200 beneficiaries of European farm aid received payments worth at least €1 million last year, according to recent analysis from farmsubsidy.org, a transparency group. Sugar processing companies topped the list of recipients, while producers in France were granted the highest total levels of support.

All of those payments were made through the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which doles out €55 billion – or roughly 40 percent of the EU budget – each year to support farmers across the 27-nation bloc.

Jack Thurston, co-founder of farmsubsidy.org, hopes that the group's analysis will help spur reforms to European farm subsidies. "The EU needs to define its objectives – whether they're

social, environmental, or food production – and then design [farm subsidy] policies which clearly meet those objectives," Thurston said in an interview. "At the moment what we've got is a bunch of policies which are essentially legacy policies from a bygone era of production support," he said.

The next set of reforms to the CAP will not take effect until the beginning of 2014, but the European agriculture commissioner has already launched an official public debate on what changes might be needed to the 50-year-old programme. (You can participate in the debate here.)

"Certainly, there are criticisms. There are imperfections. There are hopes for reform. All of these must be taken into account," Agriculture Commissioner Dacian Ciolos said at the time.

Farmsubsidy.org noted that so far the group's analysis has revealed 1,212 "subsidy millionaires" – individual recipients who collected at least one million Euros each last year (the list is available here). That beats the 2008 figure of 1,040 millionaires, and the data are still rolling in. As of midday on 11 May, farmsubsidy.org had analysed nearly €40 billion of the CAP's €55 billion budget, Thurston said.

The analysis of European farm subsidies turned up some unexpected recipients. An accordion club in Sweden got a check for €59,585.10 from the CAP; Amsterdam's Schipol Airport received just shy of €100,000 in "farm" support; and a billiard club in Denmark collected more than €30,000 to help fund its purchases of beer and soft drinks.

But such payments were dwarfed by the handouts received by several of Europe's major sugar processing firms. The single most generous CAP payment in 2009 went to the French sugar company Tereos, which collected €178 million in support. St Louis Sucre, also of France, nabbed second place with €144 million, while Poland's Krajowa Spolka Cukrowa took third with €135 million.

The CAP's focus on sugar companies is in part a by-product of recent European reforms in that sector. A WTO panel ruled in 2004 that Europe's

sugar support programme violated international trade rules. Subsequent reforms aimed at bringing the subsidies into compliance have been accompanied by restructuring aid for European sugar producers.

Part of that aid has included “one-off payments” to prod firms to move out of the sectors, Roger Waite, spokesman for the European Agriculture Commission, explained in an interview. Such measures “were funded by a levy on the sugar producers or the sugar factories staying in sugar, so one could argue that these are self financed rather than taxpayer financed,” said Waite.

European dairy farmers also scored significant CAP disbursements, thanks in large part to a steep tumble in the price of milk last year. Tens of thousands of farmers went on strike to demand stronger EU intervention, pouring millions of litres of milk onto their fields in protest. To quell the outcries, European officials used CAP funds to purchase surplus stocks, help pay for private storage, and provide dairy farmers with export refunds, Waite said. “Everyone seems to agree that these measures were very important in putting a floor in the market and stopping that fall in the milk price,” he added. But he also noted that such measures should be seen as extraordinary.

“What happened in the dairy sector last year was a reaction to the market situation, which means that it will probably not – touch wood – happen again,” he said.

In conducting their analysis, the farmsubsidy.org researchers relied on data provided directly from EU member governments. (New EU laws require the bloc’s member states to disclose the beneficiaries of EU funds.) Twenty-one governments had handed over complete – or nearly complete – data by 4 May, Thurston said; another five had submitted partial data.

The United Kingdom, however, was more than a week late in providing its farm support information. A short note posted on the website of Britain’s Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs offered an explanation: “Due to the General Election campaign, this website will not be updated with the 2009 figures until after

the election.” Britons went to the polls on 6 May; the UK’s subsidy information was posted five days later. Scotland, however, shared its information independently.

The UK’s decision to delay its data on CAP disbursements did not sit well with Commission officials, who aired their complaints in writing. “Basically we sent a letter saying ‘these are the rules and you need to comply,’” Waite said. “We don’t want people to use politics as an excuse for not publishing figures.”

Farmsubsidy.org only looked at agriculture subsidies in the European Union, but the distribution of farm payments is similarly skewed in the United States. A recent report from the Environmental Working Group, a Washington-based NGO, revealed that, between 1995 and 2009, just ten percent of US farmers collected nearly three quarter of all of the government’s subsidies. The three most heavily subsidised crops over that period were corn, wheat and cotton. A searchable database of US farm subsidies is available online at <http://farm.ewg.org/>.

ICTSD reporting; “UK delays publication of EU farm subsidy details till post-election,” THE EU OBSERVER, 3 May 2010; “Who received EU farm subsidies last year? Whitehall won’t say,” THE GUARDIAN, 5 May 2010.

WIPO Committee Increases Pace of Talks on Traditional Knowledge

The 16th session of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC) witnessed agreement on the establishment of Inter-sessional Working Groups (IWGs). With this matter resolved, delegates hoped to accelerate the committee’s substantive work, which aims to produce a draft legal instrument by September of next year.

IGC Chairman, Ambassador Philip Richard Owade of Kenya, said that the Committee had “broken new ground” and that serious work lies ahead.

Last October, the IGC won a mandate from the WIPO General Assemblies to start text-based negotiations with the aim of creating a legal mechanism to prevent “the misappropriation and misuse” of traditional knowledge. However, substantive discussions came to a halt during the 15th session, last December, when delegates came to a deadlock over how to structure the sessions of the inter-sessional working groups. These IWGs are meant to “support and facilitate the negotiations of the IGC” and to “provide legal and technical advice and analysis.”

Two proposals on the structure of the IWGs were put forward during the IGC’s December session. Under the proposal made by the African Group, each of the three IWGs would focus solely on Traditional Knowledge (TK), Traditional Cultural Expressions (TCE) or Genetic Resources (GR). The Development Agenda Group (DAG), a new coalition of largely developing countries, agreed that “it would be more efficient if one meeting was devoted to one subject matter at a time.” The African Group proposal also called for the inter-sessional groups to be limited to 27 representatives and 10 experts including seven expert observers who are from or who represent indigenous and local communities.

A coalition of developed countries and Central European and Baltic States submitted a separate proposal. This one stated that “all three inter-sessional Working Groups will deal on an equal footing with TCEs, TK and GR” and noted that each working group should look in to all three issues at once. This proposal also suggested that the working groups be open to representatives from indigenous and local communities besides experts and member states, but did not specify a minimum number.

After intense informal negotiations, delegates reached a consensus on Friday, the last day of the meeting. It was decided that “all three subjects of the IGC shall be treated on an equal footing” and that each subject should be allocated an equal amount of time for discussion. Delegates agreed that the first IWG, to be held in July, will address TCEs. The topics of the second and third IWGs will be decided at the IGC’s next session.

A few definitions might be useful. Traditional Cultural Expression (TCE), according to WIPO, include music, art, designs, names, signs and symbols, performances, architecture etc., that are integral to the cultural and social identities of indigenous and local communities. Traditional Knowledge (TK) on the other hand, encompasses all of the beliefs, traditions and practices found in a certain community. Some examples of TK include traditional healing methods, traditional water systems and traditional farming methods. Genetic resources are genetic materials of plants, animals or micro-organisms which contain a valuable resource for future generations of humanity.

Friday’s compromise also included a guarantee that “participation in the IWGs shall be open to all member states and accredited observers” and that “each member state and accredited observer shall be represented by one technical expert.” The arrangement also includes “funding for each IWG to be provided by WIPO for one representative each from 71 developing countries and countries with economies in transition.”

The only issue that remained unresolved at the end of the week-long meeting was whether WIPO’s Voluntary Fund for Accredited Indigenous and Local Communities should be used to sponsor indigenous people’s participation in the IWGs. The Indigenous Caucus called for the IGC to amend the rules of the Voluntary Fund to achieve this goal; the group also called on the committee to “consider alternative funding mechanisms.”

Text-based talks continue

Over the course of the session, IGC delegates also engaged in text-based negotiations on substantive issues.

The first topic of discussion was a newly revised paper on “Objectives and Principles” for the protection of traditional cultural expressions.

Article 3 of this paper concerns “acts of misappropriation and misuse” of TCEs. On this point, the United States expressed concern regarding the exercise of IP rights over derivatives of TCEs. It suggested that the term “derivatives”

be replaced by “adaptations” to reduce the impact of the stronger protection of TCEs on material available in the public domain. South Africa, however, said that removal of rights over derivatives would greatly affect the overall treatment and protection of TCEs. Delegates at the session asked the secretariat to undertake a study on the matter.

The IGC also discussed a revised “Objectives and Principles” paper on traditional knowledge. Article 3 of the TK instrument, which describes the general scope of subject matter, generated some debate. Spain on behalf of the EU said that the protection of TK should ensure “a balanced approach between the holder of TK and the users.” Spain also stressed “the need to facilitate access and dissemination of TK in order to ensure the dynamic and vibrant nature of the public domain.”

Norway also said that knowledge should be classed as being in the public domain when it is becoming well known outside the indigenous local community in which it originated. The representative from the Tulalip Tribes said that this theory meant that an unnecessary burden is put on holders of the knowledge; he did not agree that disclosure of the knowledge should lead to exhaustion of rights.

The last issue for discussion was the revised options paper on the protection of genetic resources. Text-based negotiations have not yet begun on this subject at the IGC, although discussions on genetic resources are underway in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and also within the context of the TRIPS Council at the WTO.

A representative from the CBD updated member states on the progress in negotiations toward an international regime on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS). The ABS regime aims to allow sovereign states to determine access to natural resources within their jurisdiction while ensuring that parties take appropriate measures to share the benefits derived from their use. She said that negotiators are still trying to figure out how to ensure compliance with prior informed consent and mutually agreed terms during the ABS process.

The IGC’s discussions on GR could be kick-started by a joint submission Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Norway and the US that was made last week. The countries presented a proposal that lays out five “objectives and principles” for the GR discussions. Countries are expected to discuss the proposal at the next session of the IGC, which will be held from 6 to 10 December.

ICTSD reporting.

IN BRIEF

US Senators Unveil Climate Bill with ‘Carbon Tariff’ Provision

United States Senators John Kerry and Joe Lieberman introduced new draft climate legislation on Wednesday, ten months after the House of Representatives passed its own bill to cut US emissions of greenhouse gases.

Senators Kerry, a Democrat, and Lieberman, an Independent, are the chief sponsors of the nearly 1,000-page piece of legislation, which aims to bolster the US contribution to addressing climate change while spurring economic growth and creating jobs at home. The bill is in line with the United States’ official international position to cut its emissions of carbon dioxide to 17 percent of 2005 levels by 2020. (An official 21-page summary of the bill is available [here](#).)

Senator Lindsey Graham, a Republican and an initial sponsor of the bill, had worked closely with Kerry and Lieberman to craft legislation that would appeal across party lines. But Graham split with the other two senators last month after Congressional Democrats announced that immigration reform would take priority over new climate legislation. His withdrawal delayed the bill’s release, which was scheduled for 26 April.

Critical for trade observers, the Kerry-Lieberman bill includes language that would allow “border measures” – also known as carbon tariffs – on imports from countries that have not enacted strict regulations on emissions of greenhouse gases.

The US House of Representatives passed its own draft climate legislation last summer. That bill also included a measure that would impose a form of “carbon adjustment” at the border, although the provision would not take effect until 2014.

Look for further analysis of the bill in next week’s issue of Bridges Weekly.

ICTSD reporting; “After long wait, Senate takes up climate,” AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE, 12 May 2010; “Kerry, Lieberman to end the suspense with climate bill rollout today,” CLIMATEWIRE, 12 May 2010.

EU, Mercosur Set to Restart Stalled Trade Talks

The European Union and the Mercosur bloc of South American countries will re-open stalled negotiations toward a free trade agreement, officials said last week. The two sides hope to conclude the talks before the end of the year.

“Negotiations such as these are challenging but the moment is right to take a fresh look at the state of discussions so far,” EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht said in a statement.

Talks toward a trade deal between the EU and the four Mercosur countries – Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay – were launched in 1999 but hit an impasse in 2004, when negotiators clashed over liberalising trade in agriculture.

Re-launching the talks with Mercosur is a priority for Spain, which holds the EU’s rotating presidency until the end of June.

EU officials say that a deal could boost European exports to the four Mercosur countries by roughly €4.5 billion each year. The European Commission also noted in a statement that the South American bloc “has not yet concluded any free trade agreements with any major competitor of the EU.”

The European Union – the South American bloc’s biggest trading partner and largest investor – accounts for just over one fifth of all of Mercosur’s international trade. Trade between the two regional groupings totalled US\$ 84 billion last year alone.

In addition to trade in goods, the proposed deal would also cover services, investment, government procurement and sustainable development.

The negotiations could hit a few bumps as negotiators turn their attention to liberalising trade in agriculture – the subject on which the talks broke down six years ago.

Copa-Cogeca, a major European farmers’ association, warned last week that a trade deal with Mercosur “would lead to a substantial contraction in the EU agriculture sector, threatening 28 million jobs.” The group also argued that producers in Mercosur countries “do not have to comply with the same high food safety, animal welfare, and environmental standards that EU farmers do.”

“We will address any adverse impact on certain sectors with specific measures, in particular in agriculture,” European Commission President José Manuel Barroso said in a statement.

The talks will be officially re-launched at an EU-Mercosur summit in Madrid on Monday. That meeting will also witness the signing of a trade deal between the EU and Colombia and Peru. Negotiations toward that agreement were finalised in March.

ICTSD reporting.

WTO IN BRIEF

Brazil, India Challenge Generic Drug Detentions

After months of speculation, Brazil and India have launched a WTO dispute against the EU and the Netherlands over the detention of generic drugs in transit, the Brazilian Mission to the WTO announced on Wednesday.

The two complainant countries have requested consultations with the EU and the Netherlands, the first step in the WTO's dispute settlement process. The first meeting of the parties to the dispute should take place later this month, a source close to the matter said.

Brazil and India's complaint centres on a series of detentions of generic drugs that took place in 2008 and 2009. In each case, a batch of medicines en route from one developing country to another was temporarily held by border officials at European harbours or airports.

The first such case concerned a shipment of a generic version of the hypertension drug Losartan potassium that was confiscated in the Netherlands in December 2008. The Dutch authorities held the shipment, which was bound for Brazil, for 36 days before it was returned to India, where the drugs had been manufactured. The medicine is protected by patent in Europe, but not in Brazil or India.

"The seizure of goods due to alleged patent infringements in the country of transit is a clear violation of the WTO disciplines on the freedom of transit, which is one of the cornerstones of the multilateral trading system," said a statement released by the Brazilian Mission on Wednesday.

The statement noted that Brazil has urged the EU to change its border regulations to prevent such detentions in the future.

"Despite all these efforts, the Regulation 1383/2003 that provides the legal basis for the seizures remains unchanged, causing lack of predictability and increased costs of medicines at

the destination markets," the Brazilian statement said.

The EU is open to revising its border regulations, the European Trade Commission insisted on Wednesday.

The European Commission "has already signalled its intentions to modify its legislation to the extent necessary to clarify the procedures relating to medicines in transit," said John Clancy, spokesman for the EU Trade Commission. "We are confident that a dispute on this issue will not be necessary," he added.

ICTSD reporting.

WTO Fisheries Talks Focus on Special Treatment for Poor Countries

Establishing appropriate levels of special and differential treatment (S&DT) for developing country fisheries subsidies monopolised the agenda as negotiators met at the WTO from 3 to 7 May. The S&DT focus was pushed primarily by an in-depth analysis from WWF of a negotiating proposal tabled by Brazil, China, India, and Mexico on 11 February (TN/RL/GEN/163).

The WWF analysis, called "One Step Forward, Three Steps Back: Comments on TN/RL/GEN/163," was released on 28 April and presented to negotiators on 3 May. A source close to the negotiations says that members picked up on many points brought up in the 17-page document. Of particular interest, the source says, are the flexibilities that would be provided low income countries.

Some parties are concerned that the nature of the special and differential treatment afforded to small-scale, artisanal fisheries in developing countries proposed in GEN/163 could allow for generous subsidies, the source says. While WWF has stated its support for broad and effective S&DT, the green group says the measure outlined in GEN/163 is tantamount to a "blank cheque."

There are concerns among some negotiators that certain elements of the proposal could lower the former chair's ambitions, which conservationists had lauded as progress in the right direction. Uruguay's Guillermo Valles Galmés recently stepped down as chair of the rules negotiating group, leaving a legacy of progressive action on subsidies.

"As chair of the WTO Negotiating Group on Rules from 2004-2010, Ambassador Valles showed leadership and innovative approach in advancing trade rules that contribute to the responsible management of marine resources by combating inappropriate subsidies to the world's fishing fleets," reads a recent WWF communiqué honouring the former chair. "Working with 153 WTO member states, Ambassador Valles' leadership heralded a number of key wins towards the pursuit of innovative trade rules that serves the long-term interests of both the environment and human society."

With no heir apparent for Valles, those close to the talks say that parties have been hesitant to engage in meaningful negotiation. Observers speculate that the absence of a chair will likely stall the negotiations for the foreseeable future.

Shortly before parties met in Geneva, the United States tabled a new proposal (TN/RL/GEN/165), that emphasises the need to stay the course (TN/RL/W/213). "The United States strongly supports the overall structure and level of ambition in the chair's November 2007 text," the proposal reads. "The premise of this proposal is that the chair's text retains its current level of ambition and its architecture."

ICTSD reporting.

FOR THE UN CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. This will be a preparatory meeting for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development that will be held in Brazil in 2012. Agenda items for the meeting include the election of officers, consideration of the draft rules of procedure for the conference, and examination of the progress to date in the implementation of outcomes from previous sustainable development summits. Side events will include sessions on the green economy and the institutional framework for sustainable development, among other topics. For more information, please see <http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/rio20/index.shtml>.

WTO events

An updated list of forthcoming WTO meetings is posted at 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.

13-14 May: Ascension Day (WTO non-working day)

18 May: Dispute Settlement Body

19 May: Committee on Trade and Development – Special Session

19 May Committee on Budget, Finance and Administration

20 May: Council for Trade in Goods

Other upcoming events

21 May, Montreal, Canada. ADVANCING THE FRONTIERS OF INTERNATIONAL TREATIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY. This event, hosted by the Centre for International Sustainable Development Law, will consist of two experts panels: "A New Access & Benefit Sharing Protocol: Aspects of Agreement in Nagoya," and

EVENTS & RESOURCES

Events

Coming up this week

17-19 May, New York City, United States. FIRST PREPARATORY COMMITTEE MEETING

“The Future of the Kyoto Protocol: Potential for Commitments in Cancun.” For more information, please see <http://www.cisd.org/news.html>.

24-28 May, Punta del Este, Uruguay. THE FOURTH ASSEMBLY OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY (GEF). The Assembly, held once every three to four years, is the governing body of the GEF, in which representatives of 177 member countries participate. It is a strategic opportunity for GEF stakeholders to meet, take stock, and collectively strengthen strategies and actions for protecting the global environment and achieving sustainable development. The Assembly will combine plenary meetings and high-level panels, exhibits, side events and GEF project site visits. Prominent environmentalists, parliamentarians, business leaders, scientists, and civil society representatives and community leaders will discuss global environmental challenges within the context of sustainable development and other international development goals. More information can be found at <http://gefassembly.org/j2/index.php>.

26-27 May, Barcelona, Spain. AGRICULTURAL PRICE VOLATILITY: PROSPECTS, CHALLENGES AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS. The agricultural sector has been deeply battered by both the food and financial crises and faces a looming climate change crisis. This seminar will examine current and projected trends in prices, review past policy responses, examine policy options available today and arrive at pragmatic recommendations on addressing volatility in the future. The meeting is being organised by the International Food and Agricultural Trade Policy Council (IPC), the University of Barcelona, and the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development. For more information, or to register, please see <https://www.z2systems.com/np/clients/agritrade/event.jsp?event=834>

28-30 May, Bonn, Germany. FIRST WORLD CONGRESS ON CITIES AND ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE. Jointly hosted by Local Governments for Sustainability, the City of Bonn and the World Mayors Council on Climate Change, Resilient Cities 2010 will offer an opportunity for participants to share the latest scientific findings, state-of-the-art approaches and

effective programmes on climate change adaptation and resilience-building in cities and urbanised areas. Case examples of local adaptation practice will illustrate approaches and experiences. The conference aims at setting the direction for future planning of and investment in urban infrastructure. For more information, please see <http://resilient-cities.iclei.org/bonn2010/home/>.

6-7 June, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM ON EAST ASIA: RETHINKING ASIA'S LEADERSHIP AGENDA. East Asia's lead in the global economic recovery has been underscored by increasing regional economic co-operation, robust domestic consumption and coordinated government stimulus measures. Alongside the remarkable economic momentum and progress of China and India, ASEAN's market of 580 million consumers is moving towards economic integration by 2015. The programme for the 19th World Economic Forum on East Asia will explore the many facets of the region's rising economic influence, such as how high-growth economies can improve their competitiveness through developing innovation-driven, green economies. At the same time, the discussions will consider to what extent ongoing regional integration will serve as the basis for Asian leaders to assume a greater leadership role in global co-operation. For more information, please email East...@weforum.org or visit <http://www.weforum.org/en/events/WorldEconomicForumonEastAsia2010/index.htm>.

7-11 June, Stockholm, Sweden. THE FIRST SESSION OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE TO PREPARE A GLOBAL LEGALLY BINDING INSTRUMENT ON MERCURY. The government of Sweden, on behalf of the Nordic Council of Ministers, will be hosting the first session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to prepare a global legally binding instrument on Mercury (INC1). The goal is to complete the negotiations before the 27th regular session of UNEP's Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in 2013. More information is available at <http://www.respoint.se/itp/event/inc1/9475;jsessionid=C836E798F1295D75ED7A479552DE7304>.

Resources

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPACTS OF INVESTMENT INCENTIVES: A CASE STUDY OF MALAWI'S TOURISM SECTOR. By Nelson Nskiu and Sheila Kiratu. Trade Knowledge Network, IISD, 2009. Many countries have policies to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and use policy instruments such as investment incentives to enable FDI relationships. While the efficacy of incentives as a determinant for FDI is often questioned, small developing countries have resorted to such measures. Malawi, for instance, has introduced a range of allowances, tax holidays and tax rate reductions for investors in its tourism sector. This case study investigates the costs and benefits of these incentives, especially in light of assisting the country in reaching its sustainable development goals. The report is available online at <http://www.tradeknowledgenetwork.net/research/pub.aspx?id=1226>.

THE IMPACT COUNTERFEIT TASKFORCE, INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS ENFORCEMENT AND SEIZURE OF MEDICINES. Edited by Sangeeta Shashikant. The Third World Network, 2010. This book is a compilation of articles – most of which appeared in the South-North Development Monitor (SUNS), a daily bulletin on development issues published by the Third World Network – that examine the concerns expressed by developing countries and civil society over the anti-counterfeit drive and medicine seizures, and report on the lively recent debates on these subjects at WHO and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). For more information, please see <http://www.twinside.org.sg/title2/IPR/ipr13.htm>.

THE SUSTAINABILITY OF CHINA'S RECOVERY FROM THE GLOBAL RECESSION. By Nicholas Lardy. Peterson Institute for International Economics, March 2010. In this policy brief, the author argues that, contrary to repeated criticisms, China's stimulus measures had a substantial consumption component and focused on investment in infrastructure rather than expanding capacity in traditional industries such as steel. Lardy maintains that certain policy reforms, as well as a more

flexible exchange rate, would reduce the distortions that have favoured China's industrial growth and exports over services and consumption. Reforms could also help sustain China's impressive long-term economic growth, he concludes. For more information, or to download the publication, please see <http://www.iie.com/publications/interstitial.cfm?ResearchID=1527>.