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GLOBAL ECONOMY

Global Steel Crisis Overshadows US-China Annual Meet

The global steel crisis took centre stage during an annual meeting between US and Chinese officials, with the two sides openly sparring over the source of the problem and ultimately agreeing to hold further discussions with other international partners, including under a possible "global steel forum."

While steel manufacturing dominated headlines during the 5-7 June gathering in Beijing, the meeting also gave both sides the opportunity to discuss other areas of common interest, such as climate change cooperation.

This year's US-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue marks the last one for the administration of US President Barack Obama, whose final term in office comes to a close in January. It also comes in the midst of a heated election debate in the United States, with presidential candidates often drawing attention to Washington's relationship with Beijing, including key points of contention between the two economic powers.

"This has been a very professional, very serious conversation," [said](#) US Secretary of State John Kerry after the talks came to a close.

"We haven't hesitated to talk about tough issues. Didn't agree on everything, but the importance is that we're willing to have those conversations, and frankly, find ways to bring ourselves together and resolve differences," he added.

The US' top diplomat also suggested that this week's talks could potentially serve in helping both sides prepare for the upcoming G-20 summit of major advanced and emerging economies, which China is due to host this upcoming autumn.

"I think everybody would agree that we have made progress in setting out an agenda for the G-20 that will help to make that also a successful meeting," said Kerry.

Finance officials square off on steel

At the start of the talks, the finance chiefs for the two major economies – which together account for one-third of global GDP – publicly disagreed on the cause of the current overcapacity problem with steel and aluminium, along with whether the situation is really as dire as the US and others have claimed.

Speaking during Monday's opening session, US Treasury Secretary Jack Lew [warned](#) of the damage China's production in steel has allegedly caused the global economy.

"Excess capacity has a distorting and damaging effect on global markets and implementing policies to substantially reduce production in a range of sectors suffering from overcapacity – including steel and aluminium – is critical to the function and stability of international markets," he said.

The US' concerns were countered by Chinese officials, who raised issues including how much of a role China has in addressing the steel crisis, along with how much control Beijing actually has over its own domestic production.

"The overcapacity problem, particularly in steel, has been subject to much hype around the world," said Chinese Finance Minister Lou Jiwei in remarks to reporters.

The Chinese finance official also countered criticism from Lew and others, noting that back when Beijing began its efforts to scale up its investment in infrastructure, "the whole world was grateful that China had boosted world growth."

"Now the world is pointing its finger at China's overcapacity problem, saying it's dragging down the whole world. What about what the world was saying before?" said Lou. He also referred to the heavy private-sector involvement in the Chinese steel sector, suggesting that government influence on cutting domestic production has its limits.

The effects of steel overcapacity on the global economy have increasingly stoked tensions among major players in the sector, including at the recent G-7 leaders' summit in Ise-Shima, Japan, along with a high-level meeting in Brussels last April on the subject. The latter of these was hosted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), together with the Belgian government. (See Bridges Weekly, [2 June 2016](#))

US officials have been among those warning that they could pursue additional trade enforcement actions against players seen as undertaking unfair trade practices, including toward China. (See Bridges Weekly, [21 April 2016](#))

Ultimately, concluding remarks from top officials indicated plans to continue discussions in different frameworks, along with noting some steps that China has agreed to undertake in response to the situation.

"Both sides recognise that excess capacity in steel and other sectors is a global issue," [said](#) Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang at the end of this week's talks. Crediting the problem to the slow global economic recovery and lowered demand, the official called for collective action, suggesting that "legal market and proper policy tools" should be used.

Lew, for his part, [said](#) that US continues to push China on "further reducing industrial capacity to move towards stronger and more sustainable and balanced growth while reducing distorting effects on global markets."

"We welcome China's commitment to undertake further steps that would enable its steel industry to be more responsive to market forces, and in doing so, progressively reduce its excess production capacity," said the US treasury chief on Tuesday.

"To this end, China has committed to ensure that its central government policies and support do not target the net expansion of steel capacity, and to actively and appropriately wind down zombie enterprises through a range of efforts, including restructuring and bankruptcy," he added, indicating that Beijing is also committed to working with other partners at the OECD, as well as being part of a possible "global steel forum" with Washington.

However, he said that the two sides remain at odds over excess capacity in aluminium, indicating that these would be the subject of additional discussions further down the road.

A factsheet on the economic outcomes of the Beijing talks outlined in further detail their discussions on steel, including on China's planned steps to continue cutting excess capacity and making sure it is not hindering market forces, thus allowing its domestic sector to become more efficient.

"The United States and China are to ensure that no central government plans, policies, directives, guidelines, lending, or subsidisation targets the net expansion of steel capacity," said the factsheet, noting also Beijing's plans to support workers who may become unemployed following steel plant closures or cuts.

The OECD's Steel Committee is due to meet from 8-9 September, with officials from both sides due to participate.

BIT update at G-20?

Past iterations of the annual US-China meet have often served for announcing updates in their negotiations for a bilateral investment treaty (BIT), an initiative that kicked off in 2008 and was later renewed in 2013. (See Bridges Weekly, [18 July 2013](#))

Following this week's talks, officials confirmed that the US and China have agreed to speed up the BIT talks, while not detailing how much progress exactly was seen during this current meeting.

"The two sides are to push the BIT negotiations forward expeditiously with a view toward reaching a mutually beneficial and high-standard treaty that effectively facilitates and enables market access and market operation," said a [joint factsheet](#) on economic outcomes.

Regarding the timeline, Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang [indicated](#) that both sides will exchange revised "negative list" offers later this month. Under a negative list, all industry sectors are open to investment except those specifically deemed as closed.

Furthermore, the US and China "will work toward a mutually beneficial high-standard agreement at an early date," said Wang.

Separately, the US treasury chief suggested that the two sides should aim to advance the BIT talks before the September G-20 summit in Hangzhou, China.

Climate cooperation

While talks on steel were reportedly contentious, discussions on climate change saw both sides issue statements noting the benefits of past cooperation – including last year in the lead-up to the UN climate talks in Paris – while calling for future collaboration going forward.

"While the breakthrough at Paris and the accord would not have been possible without our cooperation – in particular, President Xi and President Obama took the lead in announcing the respective post-2020 target and really demonstrated a sense of responsibility as major

countries – it also shows that we have more common interests than differences, as long as we opt toward dialogue, not confrontation," said Chinese State Councillor Yang Jiechi.

According to a [factsheet](#) issued after the talks, the two sides have pledged to collaborate in bringing the Paris climate accord "into force as early as possible," along with reiterating earlier statements backing the adoption this year of a phase-down amendment for climate-warming hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) under the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

ICTSD reporting; "China Pushes Back Against U.S. Complaints of Industrial Overcapacity," THE NEW YORK TIMES, 6 June 2016; "U.S., China Find Common Ground Elusive at High-Level Talks," THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, 6 June 2016; "China rails against global 'hype' on overcapacity," THE FINANCIAL TIMES, 6 June 2016; "Low hopes U.S.-China bilateral treaty progress to come before G20," REUTERS, 7 June 2016

GLOBAL ECONOMY

Current, Future Trade Deals in Focus at Paris Ministerial Gathering

Making progress in current and future trade negotiations was touted as a valuable way for increasing productivity and generating inclusive growth, according to a joint ministerial communiqué issued following the annual forum of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Paris, France.

The 1-2 June gathering came in tandem with new economic figures from the Paris-based organisation, which support findings from other international agencies that indicate a continuation of the low economic growth seen in recent years.

"We see the world economy stuck in a low-growth trap," said OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría in [announcing](#) the latest statistics. "Global growth is projected to continue to limp along at around three percent this year, and to pick up only modestly in 2017."

World real trade growth, meanwhile, is predicted to reach 2.1 percent this year, under the OECD's new estimates – below the 2.6 percent seen in 2015 – and should then reach 3.2 percent in 2017.

The OECD chief also warned that potential growth improvements could still suffer, due to risks ranging from a UK exit of the European Union to the potential financial difficulties being seen in some emerging economies.

Given this context, ministers in Paris devoted much of their communiqué to the potential policy steps that could help address the myriad challenges facing the global economy, including with regard to trade and investment.

"We recognise the need to boost trade and investment to both foster productivity, and inclusive and sustainable growth," said ministers in their [closing communiqué](#).

Other topics for discussion included adopting new social and education policies; working to take advantage of current digitalisation and innovation trends; and helping support the implementation of the Paris climate agreement, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development.

ITA, EGA, TFA

The final OECD communiqué also called for progress in various trade deals – both plurilateral and multilateral – while noting the importance these would have for the global economy.

These included the implementation of the expanded Information Technology Agreement (ITA-II) and the entry into force of a multilateral pact aimed at easing customs procedures and red tape at the border, known as the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).

Ministers also called for progress in ongoing trade negotiations, including talks among 17 WTO members for a tariff-liberalising deal on a list of environmental goods. Specifically, they urged for negotiators to conclude this Environmental Goods Agreement (EGA) by the September G-20 Summit, being hosted this year by China.

The Paris gathering also gave ministers and senior officials from some EGA participants the chance to meet on the sidelines, bringing together officials from Australia, Canada, the European Union, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, and the United States.

"[The group] committed to intensify their work together and with other EGA partners to successfully conclude the negotiations, and to find common ground on an EGA that will improve environmental protection, promote economic growth, and create green jobs, through an increase in global trade in environmental goods," said a [statement](#) released following the talks. The next EGA round is scheduled for later this month. (See Bridges Weekly, [28 April 2016](#))

Outcomes for MC11?

Ministers in Paris also addressed the prospects for agreed outcomes at the WTO's next ministerial conference, slated for the end of 2017.

"Following the Nairobi Ministerial Conference, there remains a strong commitment to advance negotiations on pending Doha issues," said ministers in Paris. "We agree that a range of issues of importance to today's global economy, that are currently subject of trade rulemaking in regional trade agreements, are highly relevant issues for consideration in the WTO."

In the months since last December's ministerial meeting in the Kenyan capital, trade talks in Geneva have been relatively quiet, as members evaluate how to proceed.

Various WTO members have begun pushing for an outcome on agricultural domestic support for the 2017 ministerial, along with discussing areas that could be addressed in future negotiations at either the plurilateral and/or the multilateral level. (See Bridges Weekly, [12 May 2016](#) and [4 May 2016](#))

Trade sources note that these talks are still in the very early stages, as members gauge ambition and interest in different possible areas for future negotiations as well as how to approach these.

"The period of reflection was valuable and many good ideas have been explored and tested. But we must now move to the next stage where governments make concrete proposals on what they would like to see in terms of outcomes at the 11th Ministerial Conference and beyond," [said](#) WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo following the Paris discussions.

However, the WTO chief warned, regular political engagement at the ministerial level will be key for achieving any agreed outcomes going forward.

TISA deal this year?

The OECD ministerial communiqué also calls for the conclusion of talks for a Trade in Services Agreement (TISA) "possibly the end of 2016," confirming related statements made publicly and privately by various officials involved in the services liberalisation initiative.

Furthermore, the Paris gathering included a meeting on the margins of ministers from countries participating in the TISA talks. The group currently counts 23 participants, with the 28-nation EU as one, which together make up 70 percent of global services trade.

"Today's meeting shows that we may not be far from reaching an agreement on TISA by the end of this year," said EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström in a [statement](#) following the TISA ministers' meeting, which she chaired.

While noting improvements in the recently exchanged revised offers, she urged participants to demonstrate "more ambition" going forward.

"The EU is ready to go an additional mile but everyone needs to join if we want to achieve an agreement able to shape the global economy of the 21st century," she said.

The ministerial meet coincided with a nine-day TISA negotiating round, held in Geneva, Switzerland, and also hosted by the European Union. The chairmanship of the TISA talks rotates between the EU, Australia, and the United States.

The round, held from 26 May to 3 June, included significant discussions on the revised market access offers, according to trade sources familiar with the talks, with all parties except one able to submit theirs earlier this month.

Sources say that while different participants have their own assessments regarding the improvements made in these offers, compared to their earlier iterations, they have generally signed off on various common criteria for how to evaluate them.

These criteria include ensuring that the final TISA deal meets, at a minimum, the commitments already inherent in the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS); making good quality commitments and improving sectoral coverage in various areas, such as maritime, education, audiovisual, energy, environment, financial and professional services, career services, and health and wellbeing; and providing commitments that at least match their "best FTA."

They also involve removing some of the party space reservations; improving the level of commitments under Mode 4; delivering on "new services" and removing reservations in these; and improving transparency on sub-federal measures and whether there are limitations on these.

Trade sources indicate that despite the advances in the revised offers, much work remains across the board for bringing these to the desired level of ambition, and that different views exist as to their quality. Negotiations also continue on the various different "annexes" for inclusion in a final TISA accord.

The next TISA round is slated for July, with another exchange of offers due in October.

ICTSD reporting.

ENERGY

Ministers Adopt Clean Energy Commitments at San Francisco Gathering

Ministers from countries making up the bulk of global clean energy investment and greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) signed off last week on a series of commitments aimed at scaling up the deployment of cleaner energy sources.

Dubbed the "Clean Energy Ministerial" (CEM), this year's event, held from 1-2 June in San Francisco, California, also included private sector representatives along with officials from various non-governmental organisations and sub-national governments.

The ministerial gathering also comes just six months after the Paris climate accord was adopted at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) Twenty-first Conference of the Parties (COP21). (See BioRes, [13 December 2015](#))

The universal climate agreement reached in Paris was signed in New York earlier this year, with countries now working to advance their respective ratification efforts, along with ironing out details relating to its operationalisation. The deal will enter into effect 30 days after 55 parties representing 55 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions have approved it domestically. (See Bridges Weekly, [2 June 2016](#))

Hosted by US Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz, ministers in San Francisco stressed the value of building on the momentum generated from the achievements seen in Paris last December, while highlighting the importance of scaling up efforts in the area of clean energy technology to help with its implementation.

"As one of the first major gatherings of clean energy leaders since COP21, CEM7 is a key tool needed to implement the clean energy goals made in Paris," said Moniz at the end of the gathering.

Other attendees last week included ministers from the EU, Canada, China, India, Japan, Mexico, and Norway. Together the group adopted a series of decisions, such as agreeing to establish an international secretariat to support their ongoing efforts in this field, and kicking off "CEM 2.0" to connect political engagement at the ministers' level with related initiatives and policy campaigns.

Additional steps agreed included launching campaigns in climate-smart cooling technologies; helping more facilities achieve certification to the International Organization for Standardization's (ISO) 50001 standard on energy management; supporting businesses who procure their energy from renewable sources; and giving additional support to agencies helping countries put their nationally-determined contributions (NDCs) to the Paris accord into action.

China will host next year's Clean Energy Ministerial, while the EU has confirmed that it will coordinate with one of its 28 member states for hosting the 2018 gathering.

The latest CEM meeting came amid warnings from the International Energy Agency (IEA) that only one sector of the 19 it monitors is currently "on track" to meet its energy scenario that would lead to a 50 percent chance of limiting global average temperatures below a two degrees Celsius rise from pre-industrial levels.

Recent calls have also been made for traditional energy companies to internalise the implications of the Paris deal, which will involve a significant shift away from fossil fuels that currently make up about 80 percent of the world's energy mix, and account for two-thirds of greenhouse gas emissions.

Mission Innovation

The San Francisco gathering also saw the first ministerial-level meeting of "Mission Innovation," an initiative launched in late November during the Paris climate talks.

The objective of Mission Innovation is to bring together actors from countries with an interest in scaling up the development and deployment of clean energy.

In San Francisco, ministers [released plans](#) outlining how their domestic governments would work to double their financial support for clean energy research and development over the next five years as pledged in Paris, along with reviewing shared information on their national needs in this area and options for future cooperation.

These efforts, they say, would eventually lead to a combined US\$30 billion dedicated to research and development in this field, which they argue could lower costs for projects as wide-ranging as electric car batteries and land-based wind power.

Various other procedural decisions were reached to guide Mission Innovation's work going forward, such as agreeing upon a mission statement and setting up a steering committee.

The European Union became the initiative's 21st member last week, joining Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Denmark, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The initiative is complemented by a "Breakthrough Energy Coalition" currently composed of 28 major investors from 10 countries that have committed to invest patient capital in early-stage technology development coming out of Mission Innovation countries.

Canada, Mexico, US review energy cooperation

Along the sidelines of the two high-level meets, energy ministers from the US, Canada, and Mexico also [examined](#) their efforts to date in boosting their cooperation on climate change and sustainable energy issues.

The three North American nations made headlines earlier in the year when they announced plans to boost collaboration in these areas, which fuelled speculation that a joint energy strategy might not be far behind. (See Bridges Weekly, [18 February 2016](#))

After their discussions, ministers said they had taken steps to determine shared priorities in these areas, launching a joint study aimed at better understanding the integration of renewables into their respective energy grids, and pledging resources to help companies meet the ISO 50001 energy management standard.

Leaders from the three countries will meet later this month in the Canadian city of Ottawa, with climate and energy slated to be on their agenda.

Tubiana, El Haite release climate action "roadmap"

In related climate news, two top officials from France and Morocco who together serve as UN "climate champions" unveiled on Monday their ["roadmap for global climate action,"](#) with a report on its progress due in time for COP22 in Marrakesh this November.

Released by Hakima El Haite, the Moroccan Delegate Minister to the Minister of Energy, Mines, Water and Environment, and French climate ambassador Laurence Tubiana, the roadmap outlines their tasks going forward in helping maintain and develop links between the UN climate talks and various voluntary initiatives underway.

The roadmap commits the two officials to helping link the UN process with actors outside that system, along with reviewing the implementation of climate initiatives and supporting new ones focused on adaptation, among other steps.

"We believe that more can be done, in particular, to actively include in this process more representatives from national and local governments, businesses, and civil society from developing countries," they said in the roadmap.

Notably, Tubiana and El Haite will be launching a "new voluntary initiative on low-emission development strategies for all interested Parties and non-Party stakeholders," explaining that the strategy would involve developing plans for cutting emissions through 2050 – a longer-term focus than what many countries have taken to date.

"We strongly believe that going through the process of developing a mid-century strategy will help countries, cities, regions, businesses, investors, and all actors to understand what it takes to achieve the long-term goals in the Paris Agreement while implementing the Sustainable Development Goals," they said.

The Paris Agreement itself also invites parties to communicate by 2020 strategies for mid-century, long-term low greenhouse gas emissions development.

The champions' five-page document additionally includes steps relating to transparency and credibility, along with helping improve the coordination between high-level gatherings and technical expert meetings.

ICTSD reporting; "UN asks governments for 2050 plans to phase out coal, oil and gas," CLIMATE HOME, 6 June 2016; "Fossil fuel groups warned not to ignore Paris accord," FINANCIAL TIMES, 6 June 2016.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

WIPO Committee Advances Working Document on Genetic Resources, Though Divisions Remain

Negotiators meeting last week at the UN's intellectual property agency made progress on a draft document aimed at protecting genetic resources, while leaving various issues unresolved in the long-running talks.

The World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (IGC) held its 30th session from 30 May to 3 June, continuing the work set out in its mandate "to ensure the balanced and effective protection of genetic resources (GRs), traditional knowledge (TK) and traditional cultural expressions (TCEs)."

Following the advances in this latest session on clarifying the consolidated working document, the heavily-bracketed text has been transmitted to the 34th session of the IGC, after which it will be submitted to the WIPO General Assembly in 2017 in accordance with the committee's mandate. However, various differences still remain going forward.

This IGC session was the second one this year dedicated to addressing the topic of genetic resources and traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources. The discussion built upon that of IGC 29, aiming to address various outstanding issues identified at that session. (See Bridges Weekly, [25 February 2016](#))

Specifically, the focus was on "narrowing gaps" between different member states' positions on how best to protect genetic resources.

As a lead up to the 30th session, the IGC held a seminar on intellectual property and genetic resources on 26-27 May, consisting of four roundtables on a variety of topics. Many speakers emphasised the need for taking a broad perspective of the issues, and considering all of the relevant international instruments and interests which must be balanced.

Member states generally praised the seminar for clarifying issues and providing useful information, with IGC Chair Ian Goss saying that they contained some "golden nuggets." The African Group also hosted a roundtable for members to discuss the issues on 24-25 May, which also received favourable reviews.

Revisions to consolidated document

The second revision to the working document reflected a trend in member states' proposals to shorten and simplify the subject matter and the objectives, the latter having been moved to the first article of the text.

Three new formulations for the objectives were proposed, as member states disagreed on whether to include preventing misappropriation and the granting of erroneous patents. Many member states objected to the reference to erroneous patents, with Azerbaijan arguing that as this is not a legal term, it should be replaced with a reference to patents not meeting the patentability criteria.

In addition, Switzerland suggested that preventing the granting of erroneous patents is already covered by the objective of increasing the efficacy of the patent system. As a potential compromise, references to preventing misappropriation and the granting of erroneous patents were added to the preamble, so that they might not need to be included in the objectives.

Nigeria, on behalf of the African Group, made a similar proposal to simplify the provision on the exceptions and limitations to the disclosure requirement. This proposal replaced the list of exceptions set out in the consolidated document with less specific language allowing members to “adopt justifiable exceptions and limitations necessary to protect the public interest.” However, as with the interventions regarding the objectives and subject matter, the proposed language was not endorsed by all member states, and so was added merely as an alternative.

There were also significant changes to the structure of the document, with the revised text now including separate alternative versions of the first five articles, with one version for the proposed mandatory disclosure requirement and the other having no disclosure requirement. Headings dividing the different sections of the document were also added.

Several member states praised this change as more clearly delineating between the two approaches to the instrument, although support was not universal. In addition, the US expressed concern that some of its proposals which were intended to set out the content of the disclosure requirement had instead been included in the “no new disclosure requirement” alternative.

Differing views on core issues

Much of the discussion focused on the proposed mandatory disclosure requirement for patent applications, with considerable debate on what the appropriate trigger for disclosure should be.

Some member states, such as Brazil and India, supported disclosure whenever a claimed invention includes utilisation of genetic resources, which they held to be a clearer and more objective standard. Others, such as the EU, found this term to be too broad, and would instead require that the invention be directly based on genetic resources, which ensures a more direct link.

A compromise between these two positions was put forward by Australia, which would require that the invention be directly based on the utilisation of genetic resources. However, this language did not find favour with all member states.

Another contentious issue was whether patent applicants would be required to disclose the country of origin or the source of the genetic resources used in the development of the claimed invention. Several member states, including Australia, Switzerland, and the US, supported using the source.

Australia also raised the concern that as many genetic resources occur naturally in several countries, if country of origin were to be used there would be a risk that applicants may select whichever country has the most favourable national legislation to disclose as the origin, regardless of the actual source. This could potentially lead to a “race to the bottom” in benefit sharing regimes.

India dismissed this concern, stating that countries would inevitably recognise the benefits to be had from strengthening their national laws, and along with Jamaica, Peru, and Brazil voiced support for the country of origin to be disclosed. Jamaica suggested that only requiring applicants to disclose the source could mean that if genetic resources originating from Jamaica have already been taken, and are then passed on again, Jamaica would not be mentioned in the application.

Databases and other defensive measures were also considered, with a minority of member states maintaining that they would be sufficient in and of themselves to ensure the protection of genetic resources. A US proposal that a joint database should be accessible by the public, rather than just patent examiners, prompted concerns from indigenous representatives, who reiterated that the traditional knowledge contained in the databases must not be viewed as being in the public domain.

The delegate from Peru proposed that if such a database were open to the public, it would be necessary to include appropriate safeguards such as filters to adequately protect secret and sacred traditional knowledge.

Concerns over process, scope

As at IGC 29, questions on procedure often dominated discussion in the plenary sessions, particularly after the release of the first revised document.

As this first revision included many textual proposals which had been submitted verbally, there was concern that the document now included language which had not been properly debated by member states. Some member states, including Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Bolivia, argued that the new textual proposals had failed to narrow gaps as set out in the IGC's mandate, and that accordingly the revision was a backwards step and should not be the basis of discussion moving forward.

While many member states endorsed the work done by the facilitators, this lack of consensus meant that the second revision was based on the consolidated document rather than the first revision. The Chair called for a review of the process to be used in future sessions of the IGC, and asked member states to submit any recommendations before the next session meets to address the protection of traditional knowledge.

Another topic which received significant attention was article four of the consolidated document, which addressed the relationship between the instrument and the Patent Convention Treaty (PCT) and the Patent Law Treaty (PLT) and required amending the PCT and PLT to allow for mandatory disclosure requirements in patent law.

However, many member states questioned whether it was appropriate or even possible for one international legal instrument to dictate the terms of another, and the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries proposed that the article be removed. However, the EU requested that it be kept in some form, and this was done by moving the text to a provision of article nine, which covers relationships with international agreements.

Once again, the Chair highlighted the state of the WIPO Voluntary Fund for Accredited Indigenous and Local Communities as a cause for concern, noting that the lack of participation by indigenous groups reflected poorly on the IGC's credibility. During the Indigenous Panel, Aroha te Pareake Mead noted that the number of indigenous representatives staying for the entirety of the session – four people – was the same as went to the United Nations in 1991 to negotiate for indigenous rights.

Moving forward

While consensus was not reached on the many major issues concerning the protection of genetic resources, many member states said that progress had been made in clarifying the different approaches.

"Principally, our mandate was to close the gap; the African Group came with the commitment and goodwill to do just that, and demonstrated significant leadership and constructive engagement and outreach to accomplish that objective," said Chidi Oguamanam, a Nigerian member of the African Group expert delegation to the 30th IGC

and Professor of Law at University of Ottawa, who is also part of the Open African Innovation Research (Open AIR) and ABS-Canada.org.

"In the end, we left with some progress, not that the gaps were closed per se in any substantive sense, but at least we have two clear pathways that are still reconcilable and capable of moving us forward and closer to the diplomatic conference," said Oguamanam.

Others similarly noted the advances made over the latest round of talks.

"Despite what seemed at times to be no progress, there were in fact moments during IGC 30 in which small but important steps were made," said Ruth Okediji of the Nigerian delegation, who is of the University of Minnesota's Law School, in e-mailed comments to Bridges.

"These moments, I believe, collectively produced a new working document that consolidated the gains derived from the informal sessions. The commitment of demandeurs remained steadfast, as did recognition that the process ultimately must reconcile the considerations of the majority of WIPO member states who view with great importance the moral, legal, and economic concerns that justify these negotiations for an international mandatory disclosure of origin requirement," added Okediji.

Wend Wendland, Director of WIPO's Traditional Knowledge Division and Secretary of the IGC, concurred that the sense from the latest talks was that of progress, while noting some remaining areas of difficulty.

"Overall, while methodology in the IGC remains a challenge, the session can be regarded as positive in that it was able to develop a revision of the main working document which will likely form the basis of future work on genetic resources," said Wendland in comments to Bridges. "In the preceding week, the WIPO Secretariat's Seminar, as well as member states' informal consultations, including the African Group's Roundtable, are seen by many as having been helpful for the process. Indigenous Peoples' participation in the IGC is declining, however, and this is a cause for concern."

Other officials, however, argued that more should have been achieved during this latest session.

"IGC 30 was quite disappointing, for at the end of the five days, the session adopted a document that leaves many critical questions on the issue of genetic resources unanswered. As a result, the mandate given by the WIPO General Assembly to 'focus on narrowing existing gaps' has remained unfulfilled," said Dr. Biswajit Dhar, a professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University's Centre for Economic Studies and Planning at the School of Social Sciences, in e-mailed comments to Bridges.

The progress which has been made will be transmitted through the working document to IGC 34, and then to the WIPO General Assembly in 2017, where member states will decide whether to convene a diplomatic conference – the UN agency's highest level of negotiations.

The IGC will meet again in September for its 31st session, and will focus on the topic of traditional knowledge.

ICTSD reporting.

AUSTRALIA

As Election Approaches, Australian Political Parties Spar on Economy, Climate

With just weeks to go before Australian voters go to the polls, the fight between the Liberal-National Coalition and the Labor Party has intensified, with trade, economic growth, and climate policy among the topics facing scrutiny in the heated public and political debate.

Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced in early May that he was calling elections for 2 July, which will determine whether his governing Coalition will remain in power, or if the opposition Labor Party, led by Bill Shorten, will take office.

The past several years have seen a series of leadership changes in Canberra, both internally in the Liberal and Labor Parties, and also at the helm of the country's government. Turnbull himself took over from Tony Abbott, also of the Liberal Party, after successfully issuing a leadership challenge against him last year. (See Bridges Weekly, [17 September 2015](#))

Duelling growth narratives

In recent weeks, the Coalition [has argued](#) that the Labor Party is waging a "war on growth" that will create a significant tax burden for Australians while hindering its economic prospects.

Turnbull's team has particularly taken issue with the Labor Party's proposals on taxes on multinational businesses, which the Coalition argues affect companies that actually employ Australian citizens. The incumbents have also criticised proposed taxes on income, housing, and capital gains, as well as Labor's plans to enact emissions trading schemes. (See Bridges Weekly, [4 May 2016](#))

Meanwhile, Turnbull has put forward an economic plan which, among various other components, includes a focus on negotiating and implementing trade agreements to boost the country's exports.

Touting past successes by the Liberal Party in closing trade deals with China, Japan, and South Korea – all three of which are now in force – he has also [highlighted](#) the ongoing negotiations for a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and a potential trade deal with the European Union as bearing the promises of "creating even greater opportunities for Australian businesses."

Turnbull has further [called](#) for moving forward on ratifying and implementing the 12-country Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement, of which Australia is a signatory.

Meanwhile, Labor released a [10-year economic plan](#) on Wednesday which outlined its own approach to boosting Australian growth and jobs. On trade, Shorten similarly called for slashing trade barriers in order to boost exports of goods and services, without providing much additional detail.

The plan also claims that the Liberal Party's "record on economic management is in tatters," crediting the incumbent government's policies with lower living standards, slow wage growth, and less private investment.

In separate statements, Labor Party officials clarified this week that they would like to renegotiate certain components of the trade deals concluded under Liberal Party leadership, particularly the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) provisions in any trade deal involving Australia.

"The former Labor government determined it would not accept ISDS provisions in new trade agreements," said Penny Wong, the trade spokeswoman for the Labor Party, in comments to the Guardian newspaper.

"The Abbott-Turnbull government reversed this policy and has agreed to ISDS provisions in three new free trade agreements, including the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership," she added."

Current trade officials in the Turnbull government have argued that re-opening those deals would be tantamount to tearing them up, with damaging implications for Australia's exports.

The Turnbull government is also conducting a review with Japanese negotiators on whether to add ISDS provisions to their bilateral pact, signed in 2014 and in force as of [January 2015](#) (See Bridges Weekly, [10 July 2014](#))

Carbon pricing debate continues

While additional details on Labor's specific plans for trade were limited in the economic policy document, the opposition party did stress its goals of boosting investment in renewable energy, tying this to previously-announced policy goals in this area. (See Bridges Weekly, [4 May 2016](#))

Indeed, the long-running controversy over the direction of Australian climate and energy policy has continued as the election draws ever nearer, with the opposing parties arguing what implications different approaches may have on the country's growth and environmental prospects.

Labor has backed a plan that includes, among other policies, the introduction of two emissions trading schemes, one of which would be specific to electricity generation. (See Bridges Weekly, [4 May 2016](#))

The Coalition, for its part, has argued that doing so would be tantamount to reinstating the carbon tax, which was repealed under Abbott's government in 2014 and was highly unpopular at the time. (See Bridges Weekly, [17 July 2014](#))

However, recent [polls](#) conducted by Vote Compass, part of Australia's ABC News, suggest that 63 percent of Australians are in favour of carbon pricing, marking a potential shift in public sentiment. The survey included over 252,000 respondents.

The Labor Party has also backed goals such as drawing half of Australia's energy supply from renewable sources by 2030, along with ensuring that the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) has sufficient financial support.

"Labor's positive policies on renewable energy will reverse the three years of destruction wrought by the Abbott-Turnbull Government on this growth industry which employs 20,000 Australians," said Shorten in a [press release](#) last week.

Labor has also lambasted the current "Direct Action" climate plan – put in place by Turnbull's predecessor, Tony Abbott – arguing that it will actually allow for an increase in emissions. Shorten has also claimed the ruling party's policies have adversely affected renewable energy investment in Australia, particularly in the year after Abbott took office.

Turnbull, for his part, has argued that Australia's current policies put it on track to meeting its commitments to slash emissions by 26-28 percent by the year 2030, and warned that the various measures being put forward by Labor – including almost doubling Canberra's emissions target – could be devastating for the economy.

ICTSD reporting; "Vote Compass: Australians back carbon pricing, want more action on climate change," ABC NEWS, 3 June 2016; "Labor pledges to review trade deals that let companies sue Australia," THE GUARDIAN, 7 June 2016; "Coalition may add clause to Japan trade deal that lets foreign companies sue Australia," THE GUARDIAN, 8 June 2016.

AGRICULTURE

G-20 Agriculture Ministers Step Back from Launching ICT Platform

Differences among the G-20 major advanced and emerging economies have prompted the group to step back from launching a new platform on information and communications technology (ICT) in farming.

Draft documents seen by Bridges had indicated that agriculture ministers would set up the new initiative at their meeting in Xi'an, China, last Friday. (See Bridges Weekly, [2 June 2016](#))

While the final [communiqué](#) issued after the meeting highlights the role of new technologies, it now says that ministers invite various agencies to make proposals to the G-20 agriculture deputies ahead of the next meeting. The agencies referred to included the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

An earlier draft of the text had said that ministers would "decide to launch an Agricultural ICT Exchange and Cooperation Platform (Annex) based on assessment by FAO, IFPRI, and OECD on existing global agricultural ICT applications and platforms."

"There was a lot of opposition from Russia," explained one source, who told Bridges that it was unclear to them why Moscow objected to the initiative.

Sources told Bridges that G-20 agriculture ministers were due to meet early next year under the German presidency, in the margins of an annual agricultural ministerial convened by Berlin each January. This year, for the first time, the G-20 has agreed that agriculture ministers should meet regularly.

The international agencies would have to make their proposals during this year's Chinese presidency due to the unusually short duration of the talks on agriculture in 2017, sources told Bridges.

Language on anti-microbial resistance was also softened, reportedly at the insistence of meat-exporting countries such as Brazil. Anti-microbial resistance is resistance of a microorganism to an anti-microbial drug that was originally effective for treatment of infections caused by it. Growing resistance is making it harder for governments to ensure that diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria are treated effectively.

While G-20 ministers expressed their support for the implementation of the World Health Organization's global action plan in this area, language committing countries to "phase out the use of medically important antibiotics for growth promotion in animals" was dropped from the final draft of the communiqué.

The section of the declaration on trade, reaffirming the outcomes of the WTO's tenth ministerial conference last year in Nairobi, was virtually unchanged from earlier drafts. Similarly, ministers did not alter a clause supporting the "vital role of the multilateral trading system in global food security."

ICTSD reporting.

WILDLIFE TRADE

US Confirms Additional Steps to Curb Ivory Trade

Washington officials [announced](#) last week that the US would be banning nearly all domestic commercial trade of African elephant ivory, in a move that proponents say could help tackle poaching and illegal wildlife trafficking.

The news was confirmed by the country's Fish and Wildlife Service, and is meant to fulfil an Executive Order issued by US President Barack Obama in [2013](#).

The [revisions](#) aim to allow for "more strictly controlling US trade in ivory, without unnecessarily restricting activities that have no conservation effect or are strictly regulated under other law."

The final rule issued last week will ban foreign and interstate trade in African elephant ivory, with certain exceptions. For example, there are exceptions for certain pre-existing goods, such as musical instruments, that only contain a minimal level of ivory and meet other conditions. The new rules will also limit the import of African sport-hunted trophies to two per hunter annually.

The move is also geared to help meet the pledge made by Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping during a meeting in Washington in September 2015, when they both agreed to take "significant and timely steps" to end their respective domestic commercial ivory trades. (See BioRes, [14 October 2015](#))

The United States is the world's second largest consumer of illicit ivory behind China, and experts have long argued that a revision of existing policies is necessary, given the difficulties in distinguishing between legal and illegal ivory.

Conservation groups and proponents of the new rule have argued that earlier policies were too lax, allowing poachers to exploit gaps in those regulations to continue trafficking in illegal wildlife.

Daniel M. Ashe, director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service told the New York Times that the "large fog of legal trade that has been concealing the illegal trade of ivory" will finally be lifted when the new final rule enters into force.

The decision has generally yielded a positive response from environmental groups. Ginette Hemley, senior vice president of wildlife conservation at the World Wildlife Fund, [said](#) the new regulations "send a strong signal to the international community that the US is committed to doing its part to save elephants in the wild," and urged other countries to follow suit.

US Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell, who serves as co-chair of the President's Task Force on Wildlife Trafficking, also [said](#) that she hoped other nations would act similarly to "quickly and decisively stop the flow of blood ivory."

CITES COP forthcoming

The news also comes amid preparations for the next Conference of the Parties (COP17) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), where ivory trade is slated to be a topic for discussion.

The meeting is scheduled for 24 September to 5 October in Johannesburg, South Africa, with parties set to discuss proposals on possible changes in the classification of African elephant under the CITES "appendices."

CITES aims to prevent the overexploitation of animal and plant species by ensuring international trade does not threaten their survival, covering over 35,000 listed species. These are listed in a series of appendices, depending on risk, which determine how their trade should be regulated. (See BioRes, [15 July 2014](#))

For example, [Appendix I](#) includes endangered species threatened with extinction, with trade in specimens of these species permitted only in exceptional circumstances, while Appendix II species are those which may not currently face the potential for extinction but may need controls to ensure this risk does not arise.

ICTSD reporting; "U.S. Bans Commercial Trade of African Elephant Ivory," THE NEW YORK TIMES, 2 June 2016; "Huge News for Elephants: U.S. Bans Ivory Trade," ECOWATCH, 3 June 2016; "US Adopts Near Total Ban on Ivory Trade," THE GUARDIAN, 2 June 2016; "African Elephants 'Killed Faster Than They are Born,'" THE GUARDIAN, 3 March 2016; "South Africa an Outlier on Ivory Policies," NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, 13 January 2016.

EVENTS & RESOURCES

Events

Coming Soon

10 June, London, UK. ASSESSING CHINA'S FUTURE. This Chatham House event will feature as its guest speaker David Shambaugh of George Washington University, who will discuss some of the questions raised about China's economic, societal, and foreign policy direction in his book "China's Future." The author will discuss possible scenarios going forward and what they may mean in practice. More information is available [here](#).

13-14 June, Oxford, UK. THE ANNUAL BANK CONFERENCE ON AFRICA: MANAGING THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF URBANIZATION IN AFRICA. This World Bank event, held at Oxford University, will place a specific focus on urbanisation in sub-Saharan Africa, with the gathering set to feature book presentations, roundtables, seminars, and more. For additional information, including a list of partner organisations, please visit the event [website](#).

13-24 June, Geneva, Switzerland. WIPO-WTO COLLOQUIUM FOR TEACHERS OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY. This two-week colloquium is being jointly organised by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The event is designed specifically for educators from developing countries and those with economies in transition. More information, including a provisional programme for the event, is available [here](#).

14 June, Beijing, China. REGIONAL ECONOMIC OUTLOOK ON SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA. The Brookings-Tsinghua Center is hosting a public lecture on the Regional Economic Outlook for sub-Saharan Africa, featuring Roger Nord, Deputy Director of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) African Department, and Céline Allard, head of the Regional Studies Division in the same department. The two IMF officials will discuss the overall economic landscape for the continent, as well as the specific ramifications of the declines in commodity prices. The talk will be followed by a Q&A session. To register for this event, please visit the Brookings [website](#).

14-16 June, Brussels, Belgium. EU SUSTAINABLE ENERGY WEEK POLICY CONFERENCE. This event will be part of the EU's Sustainable Energy Week, which is hosted by the European Commission's Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, on behalf of the Directorate General for Energy. The gathering will bring together public officials, along with representatives from energy agencies, industry groups, the private sector, and civil society for a discussion on sustainable energy policy. An awards ceremony will also be held to recognise outstanding innovation in energy efficiency and renewables, with prizes awarded from an expert jury and European citizens. More information on this event and EU's Sustainable Energy Week can be found [here](#).

14-17 June, Rome, Italy. GACSA ANNUAL FORUM: CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE IN ACTION. The Annual Forum of the Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture (GACSA), which is meeting under the theme "CSA in Action," will provide the opportunity for participants to share solutions, discuss challenges, and build partnerships on CSA. The event will include sessions on: GACSA country case studies (Costa Rica, France, Ireland, Malawi, Tanzania, and Vietnam); climate finance and investment; CSA knowledge in action; regional CSA alliances; and future opportunities for scaling up CSA. The GACSA Action Groups on knowledge, enabling environment, and investment will also meet, as will the GACSA Strategic Committee. Additional information is available at the GACSA [website](#).

15-16 June, Brussels, Belgium. EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT DAYS 2016. The European Development Days (EDD) 2016 will convene under the theme "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," bringing together 6,000 participants from the development community for over 120 main sessions and side events. Topics for discussion will include gender, climate change, migration, sustainable consumption and production, circular economy, trade, growth, and sustainable development. A follow-up event, the EU-Africa Business Forum, will focus on sustainable energy and related subjects, highlighting the role of the private sector in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Registration information can be found on the event's [website](#).

16 June, Washington, US. INCLUSIVE GROWTH IN CITIES: A CONVERSATION WITH OECD SECRETARY-GENERAL ANGEL GURRIA. Hosted by the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program and the National League of Cities Institute, this event will examine rising inequality in cities and possible policy approaches. OECD Secretary-General Ángel Gurría will offer remarks on this new initiative, which will be followed by a panel discussion from leaders across a range of sectors. For more information, as well as to register for this event, please visit the event [website](#).

WTO Events

An updated list of forthcoming WTO meetings is posted [here](#). 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.

15-16 June: Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade

15 + 17 June: Trade Policy Review Body - The Democratic Republic of the Congo

Other Upcoming Events

20-24 June, Washington, US. TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT SEMINAR. Held at American University's Washington College of Law, this seminar is designed to provide participants with the skills to negotiate and implement international trade agreements with sustainable development provisions, particularly in light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Information on how to register for this course is available [here](#).

23 June, Brussels, Belgium. DIGITAL TRADE: OPPORTUNITIES OF THE INTERNET FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE. This event, organised jointly by the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) and DIGITALEUROPE, will focus on the potential difficulties and opportunities that the digital economy provides both for the European Union and for international trade more broadly. A list of participants and additional practical information is available at the ICTSD [website](#).

26-27 July, Tokyo, Japan. SOURCES OF INCOME INEQUALITY IN ASIA. This event, hosted by the Asian Development Bank Institute, aims to examine factors that contribute to income inequality in Asia, looking at a range of different economies in the region. Topics for discussion will include, among others, housing prices, financial inclusion, and urbanisation. More information is available [here](#).

Resources

COMPETING LIBERALISATIONS: TARIFFS AND TRADE IN THE 21ST CENTURY. By Jean-Christophe Bureau, Houssein Guimbard, and Sébastien Jean for CEPII (June 2016). This paper gives an overview of trade policy trends since the launch of the WTO's Doha Round, and suggests what implications these would have had on a concluded Doha outcome. The authors include in their analysis the growing number of regional trade agreements that have been completed or are currently under negotiation. The trade policy paper is available [here](#).

TRADE AND ANIMAL WELFARE PROJECT. By EuroGroup for Animals (2016). This project examines trade in animals and animal-based products, particularly in the light of recent and ongoing trade agreements. The project takes a particular focus on animal welfare with a view to defending EU standards in this area, along with ensuring animal welfare in third countries. To learn more, or to read recent papers on the EU's bilateral trade agenda and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), click [here](#).

DELIVERING AID FOR TRADE. Published by the UN Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity (June 2016). This report aims to outline overall contributions to the Aid for Trade initiative, focusing particularly on the UN's role and participation in this area, and tying it into the efforts to implement the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The report can be downloaded in full [here](#).

AFRICA'S RISE – UNINTERRUPTED? By Steven Radelet for the International Monetary Fund (June 2016). This article examines data across two decades of development progress, from 1994 to 2014, to question whether Africa's growth surge is over. The author explores some of the challenges facing African countries in the face of a global slowdown and growing threats such as climate change, and offers policy recommendations for maintaining development progress. The publication is available [here](#).

UK UNPLUGGED? THE IMPACTS OF BREXIT ON ENERGY AND CLIMATE POLICY. By Antony Froggatt, Thomas Raines, and Shane Tomlinson for Chatham House (May 2016). This paper reviews the risks and trade-offs related to climate and energy policy that may be associated with a possible "Brexit" through five different models. The authors argue that climate and energy policy would be among those areas that would require negotiation should the UK decide to leave the 28-nation bloc, with the authors arguing against a "Brexit" for various reasons. This research paper is available [here](#).

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