



Facilitators' Report

The WTO's full membership gathered on October 29 to review the progress achieved on developing a Ministerial Declaration for the 10th Ministerial Conference (MC10) to be held in Nairobi this December. At the center of the discussion was the report circulated by the facilitators – Ambassadors Gabriel Duque (Colombia), Harald Neple (Norway), and Stephen Karau (Kenya) – following 10 days of consultations with 58 Members representing either themselves or a group of countries. The conversations covered three broad questions: what should the structure of the Ministerial Declaration be; what elements should the Declaration contain; and what process should be followed to arrive at a consensual Declaration?

The consultations revealed that the majority of delegations made reference to a “Bali-like” Ministerial Declaration in three parts that would list various decisions and be structured around the following themes:

1. The importance of the WTO as an Organization including its achievements, in particular in the context of its 20th anniversary;
2. The deliverables for MC10:
 - Regular work under the General Council and related decisions;
 - Doha Development Agenda (DDA) deliverables;
3. The future work of the WTO/Post-Nairobi.

In terms of the deliverables, there is a general sense that Export Competition (EC), development/LDC issues, and transparency in a number of areas should be at the core of the Nairobi package. On Export Competition however, Agriculture negotiations chairman, Ambassador Vangelis Vitalis, highlighted some issues such as whether EC should be linked to the special safeguard mechanism (SSM).

The G-33 group of developing countries has pushed for the inclusion of the SSM as part of the Nairobi package, but others, such as the Cairns Group, are strongly opposed given the absence of results on market access. The SSM would allow countries to raise tariffs instead of opening markets, which, according to the Cairns Group, would be a step in the wrong direction for agriculture reform; The Group further emphasized that introducing the mechanism without any tariff cuts would be meaningless.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Vitalis suggested adding 7 years to the original understanding to eliminate export subsidies by 2013. Consequently, developed Members would commit to erasing their export subsidies by 2020 while developing countries would end theirs in 2023. The Chair's proposal was supported by most Members, a WTO source said.

Post-Nairobi and the Future of the DDA

While some Members are asking to preserve the progress achieved thus far on the DDA and to consider the Nairobi package as a stepping stone towards the conclusion of the Doha round, others are opposed to continuing negotiations on the Doha

round and its mandate. One delegation even asked to explicitly declare the end of the Round in Nairobi although it later said it “could agree to a Ministerial Declaration that was silent on the fate of the DDA.”

The US has stated in previous meetings that the absence of any substantial outcome concerning the Doha round in Nairobi would effectively spell the death of the DDA. However, the facilitators reported that a large number of delegations now stressed the importance of continuing the negotiations, “without mentioning a specific framework.”

Some are asking that the Ministerial Declaration include wording favourable to considering new approaches, thus opening the door to exploring plurilateral negotiations in areas such as agriculture and NAMA.

“We need two things for success at the Ministerial Conference. First, we need serious engagement on substance in the Negotiating Groups. Second, Members need to rethink the red lines that they have been drawing. We must see more flexibility and pragmatism in the handful of days and weeks remaining if we want to have positive outcomes in Nairobi.”

Another meeting of the full Membership will be held on November 3.

Geneva Watch is published by Dairy Farmers of Canada, Chicken Farmers of Canada, Egg Farmers of Canada, Turkey Farmers of Canada and Canadian Hatching Egg Producers to report on the various events occurring in Geneva, particularly on the WTO negotiations on agriculture.

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Legal Deposit: National Library of Canada, ISSN 1496-9254

