



Geneva WATCH

An overview of the bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral trade negotiations

Charles Akande, Editor

OECD Mini-Ministerial

The World Trade Organization (WTO) Director General, Roberto Azevêdo will take part in the traditional informal gathering of Trade Ministers, hosted by Australia and Norway, on the sidelines of the May 31–June 2 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Ministerial Council Meeting in Paris.

Azevêdo is expected to provide an update to review where Members stand since the last Ministerial Conference (MC10) held in Nairobi last December. Key countries are also expected to discuss the agenda for next year's Ministerial Conference (MC11).

The European Commission was believed to present concrete ideas for the MC11 in Paris, but one informed source now says that the Commission proposal is more likely to be tabled this fall.

Meanwhile, a group of like-minded countries including Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, and the EU are currently working on ideas to advance negotiations on domestic support, which is expected to be one of the major topics for the Paris mini-ministerial discussion.

Discussions are also planned on two key plurilateral negotiations currently taking place at the WTO. The EU will host a meeting of the trade in services agreement (TiSA), which is expected to conclude this year. The U.S., meanwhile, is expected to host a meeting on the environmental goods plurilateral negotiations.

Clear Interest in Fisheries

WTO Members have expressed a “clear interest” in securing an outcome on the rules negotiations at the MC11 in 2017, with a large number of delegations interested in a result on fisheries subsidies disciplines, the chairman of the negotiating group on rules, Ambassador Wayne McCook of Jamaica, said on May 25th.

Consultations have been taking place between interested Members, and while many prefer a multilateral approach on fisheries subsidies, some have signalled that they would be prepared to consider a plurilateral approach.

New Zealand presented a new proposal intended to clarify the issues for Members on fisheries subsidies, which was co-sponsored by Colombia, Iceland, Norway, Pakistan, and Uruguay. The proposal sets out five questions to members with a view to sharing information on developments in the sector as background for further discussion on fisheries subsidies.

Morocco, on behalf of the African Group, said the talks on fisheries subsidies must be allocated swift and specific attention, independent of other rules issues, given the state of global fisheries stocks, and highlighted the need for appropriate flexibilities in favour of least-developed countries and small and vulnerable economies. Australia, Canada, Chile, the EU, Mexico, Panama, Peru, South Africa, and Saudi Arabia also stated the importance of achieving an outcome in this sector.

China said that it understands the concerns on fisheries subsidies and that this was an important part of the rules negotiations, but added that “cherry picking” specific issues was no way to reach a multilateral deal.

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



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