



Geneva WATCH

An overview of the bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral trade negotiations

Charles Akande, Editor

Trade Ministers Pledge to Get More Involved in the Negotiations

Trade Ministers from 30 key World Trade Organization (WTO) countries, including the U.S., the EU, Norway, India, and China, met on June 2nd on the sidelines of the 2016 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Forum to discuss the next steps with the negotiations.

The tone of the discussion was much less antagonistic than in past meetings, officials who attended the gathering, said. The group agreed with WTO Director General Roberto Azevêdo's assessment that the time has come to move from reflection to action.

"The period of reflection was valuable and many good ideas have been explored and tested" Azevêdo said, "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 (MC11) and beyond," he stressed at the meeting.

The ministers and senior officials agreed to intensify discussions with a goal of quickly identifying areas where agreement might be possible at the MC11. They agreed to provide the necessary political support so their negotiators can start putting concrete proposals on the table to help advance the negotiating process.

In addition, ministers pledged to engage directly in the negotiations. They agreed with Azevêdo to intensify their own involvement in the discussions to help facilitate this process by meeting more frequently.

The group also discussed the need to bridge long-standing differences in agriculture. There were no

surprises as Members wanted their issues to be tackled in priority, though this time they recognized the need to be pragmatic and avoid overloading the MC11 agenda.

The U.S. for instance spoke about the need to tackle all facets of domestic support, while China specifically targeted aggregate measurement of support (AMS). Benin insisted on finding a solution on cotton, while India asked to deliver final outcomes on the special safeguard mechanism (SSM) and food security.

The Commission urged delegations to table ideas on how to move the post-Nairobi agenda forward.

"We are not going to move from reflection to action if nobody puts something on the table," the EU was quoted as saying during the meeting. The EU was expected to present concrete ideas on the way forward in Paris, France, but has decided to delay its proposal for later this fall, most likely around the G-20 meeting, one European source said.

Argentina, meanwhile, offered to host the 11th Ministerial Conference, which will take place in December next year. The move came as a surprise as several countries, including Peru, the Philippines, and Rwanda, were rumored as potential destinations for the conference. However, Members who attended the Paris gathering welcomed Argentina's offer, which would now be formally introduced and discussed (and probably accepted) at the WTO's July General Council meeting.

Environmental Goods Agreement Negotiations

On June 1st, the U.S. hosted a meeting on the environmental goods agreement (EGA) with Trade

Ministers and senior officials from seven EGA Members – Australia, Canada, the EU, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, and the U.S. – to discuss progress in the negotiations and to chart a path toward successful conclusion later this year.

The group has been working closely together with the aim of concluding an ambitious EGA with all participants ahead of the G-20 Leaders Summit in Hangzhou, China this September.

The group welcomed progress achieved thus far, which focused on a potential EGA landing zone. They reiterated their commitment to an ambitious EGA that eliminates tariffs on a broad range of environmental goods and committed to intensifying their work together, and with other EGA partners, to successfully conclude the negotiations this year.

The seven countries encouraged other WTO Members with a similar level of ambition and interest to join the EGA plurilateral.

Trade in Services Group also Targets End of Year Conclusion

The trade in services' (TiSA) trade ministers reaffirmed their commitment to conclude their plurilateral negotiation this year following their June 1st gathering in Paris, France. The optimistic posture came in part from the EU willingness to improve its market access offer to the level of what it had agreed in CETA “or very close to it.”

The Commission said it wants the U.S. to do the same with the TPP. The U.S. was also urged to show flexibility on mode 4 (movement of professionals for the purpose of providing a service) and on its 1920 *Merchant Marine Act* which regulates maritime commerce in U.S. waters and between U.S. ports. Sources said the U.S. has rejected any provisions aiming to circumvent the act.

The next TiSA round will take place the week of July 11th with the revised market access offers not expected before October.

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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