

## **Editorial: The Indian Effect**

After the U.S. presidential elections, the Indian general elections were the next in order to impact the negotiations. Now that Prime Minister Monmohan Singh's Congress party has won, anticipation of major government shuffling has dwindled. All eyes, meanwhile, are now focused on whether Kamal Nath will remain at the helm of the Commerce and Industry Ministry or be promoted to the Foreign Affairs Ministry, which some trade observers say is more prestigious than his current portfolio.

The Indian business community is reportedly satisfied with the work Nath has undertaken the past five years in managing to put India on the WTO map, elevating the country to a role as one of the negotiations' pivotal players. However, if Nath—who aims, some say, to one day become India's Prime Minister—is moved to the Foreign Affairs Ministry, this would certainly bring some changes in the negotiations' dynamic.

## **Green Room**

The WTO's Director General, Pascal Lamy, convened a Green Room meeting the afternoon of May 20<sup>th</sup> with some of the organization's major players to help him prepare for the May 26-27 General Council meeting. The DG, according to officials, wanted to collect Members' views on where things currently stand with respect to the negotiations.

Officials said Members were all pleasantly surprised with U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk's visit to Geneva and none of them opposed the idea of moving the DDA forward. The problem is how to proceed. All agreed that both multilateral and bilateral negotiations were needed, but this is where consensus stopped, the official reported.

As Brazil's ambassador, Roberto Azevedo, summarized it: although Members know what they want, at this point they don't know how to get there. Those who think there is a great imbalance in the December 2008 package are clearly looking for trouble, so are those who think that Members should divert the multilateral process, he cautioned. This is all about transparency even though everybody seems to accept that testing one another was necessary—and that this has to be done bilaterally, the source said.

It is obvious that the political dynamic has improved over December 2008. Things are brighter than they were back then and it seems that Kirk has somehow changed the atmosphere. The negotiating groups are turning up their activities now that some critical elections—namely the U.S., India and South Africa—have been completed.

On the skipping modalities idea, U.S. Ambassador, Peter Allgiere, clarified the U.S. position, telling ambassadors that all the U.S. needs to know is what access they will get in some areas of the negotiations and more importantly in NAMA (non-agricultural market access) sectorals. As such, some bilateral talks need to take place to determine the parameters of what the outcome would be, but, Allgiere added, the U.S. is not suggesting skipping modalities.

In short, they need to get to the point where members will be able to show more cards. Lamy acknowledged that at some point this is going to happen and that Members need to realise that we are entering the end game. In that sense, he hopes that the various mini-ministerials this summer would help propel things forward. That said, it was reported that all Members in the room agreed that we should not rush into a Doha ministerial unless we are ready.

## NAMA

At a short NAMA meeting on May 20<sup>th</sup>, the chairman, Swiss ambassador Luzius Wasescha, noted with satisfaction that members have done “a lot of work” and “with great seriousness” on the total elimination of tariffs in selected sectors of the NAMA product coverage.

Members including the U.S., EU and Canada reported on the consultations they have undertaken lately, saying that the work so far has been at “technical level” or “facts-based”. Some of this work consisted of sharing technical information about the sectors, and the tariff and trade data profiles of different members. The United States have previously identified three sectors where they wanted emerging developing countries—India, China and Brazil—to participate: chemical products, industrial machinery and electronic goods

Wasescha said he will invite technicians and ambassadors to attend a training session focusing on scheduling, that is how to prepare the comprehensive list of commitments as a result of the negotiations. To this effect, and given the complexities of the work involved, the chair is organising a workshop the week of July 13<sup>th</sup>, to train delegations. He added that capital officials could attend as well, but was quick not to link this exercise with the idea of skipping modalities. He argued that there might be—at the political level—other ways to advance the negotiations by either changing the approach (or not) but as far as he is concerned, the NAMA negotiating group will continue their discussions based on the December 2008 text. The July 13<sup>th</sup> meeting will introduce Members to the concept of scheduling although there will be some bilateral meetings taking place at the same time between ambassadors.

## Upcoming Events

- General Council, May 26- 27, July 28-29, Oct. 13-14, Dec. 17-18, 2009
- EU Elections, June 7, 2009
- Cairns Group Ministerial Meeting, June 7-9, 2009 (Indonesia)
- OECD Ministerial Meeting, June 24-25, 2009 (Paris, France)
- G-8 Summit, July 8–10, 2009 (L'Aquila, Italy)
- NAMA Week, week of July 13, 2009
- APEC Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Trade, July 21-22, 2009 (Singapore)
- WTO Public Forum, Sept 28–30, 2009
- G-20 Summit, Date to be Confirmed, (New York, USA)

**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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