

Editorial: **Time to Shake Things Up?**

With the failure of the G-5 to come up with a clear proposal for the way forward, several ideas have been brought forward to help making things move forward. One of those came from Dar Es Salaam (Tanzania) where the World Economic Forum on Africa held its meeting, and where African Members call for an early harvest in the Doha Round in the form of Duty Free Quota Free access. Another one is to expand the newly formed G-5 to include other key players to brainstorm the next steps. But whatever the solution put forward, it is unlikely that Members will start seriously negotiating before the organization's summer break.

Agriculture Negotiations Informal Open-Ended meeting

The agriculture negotiating group met on May 3rd, in what was the first meeting since the March "stock-taking", to discuss how the agriculture negotiations should proceed.

Agriculture chairman, David Walker, told negotiators he would adapt his plans for discussion on modalities later this month, to take into account suggestions from a number of delegations including the EU, India, and Brazil. The chair had already announced that in the week of May 17th he would continue to hold open-ended and smaller consultations for Members to discuss templates, data and the "bracketed and otherwise annotated" issues contained in the December 2008 draft modalities text.

However, at the May 3rd meeting, several delegations asked that a number of topics for discussion be added to the list of 10 or so issues Walker had previously listed at the March stock-taking meeting. India for instance, was one of the countries arguing that the present talks should include additional questions and that ambiguities should be sorted out on some questions and the others requiring political interpretation in the present draft. Argentina also called for work on making the draft less ambiguous and more precise.

Regarding data and templates, Australia, speaking on behalf of the Cairns Group, urged Members to continue working on these in meetings of the full Membership so that all can participate and that all proposed templates and tables be recognized as "simply drafts" which "final form can be settled only once final modalities are agreed". Australia suggested that each stage starts with an overview before going into details to allow Members to know where the work is heading. Suggestion was also made that delegations be given more time between meetings to consider what has been discussed, consult among themselves, and prepare for the next meeting.

In the end, Walker urged delegations to circulate their ideas on a "road map" before the meetings the week of May 17th.

General Council

At the May 4th General Council, it was WTO Director General, Pascal Lamy's turn to call on Members to "build on what is already on the table in the form of Chairs texts and to keep development as central to the outcome of the Round." The draft modalities texts came under fire from various delegations, most notably the United States, which has been asking for additional market access from emerging developing countries to re-balance Doha's ambition. On the other side, some warned against re-opening the draft modalities as it may backfire and lead to a flood of new demands from various Members.

With the aim to continue narrowing the existing differences, Lamy suggested that Members concentrate on the so-called "cocktail approach" which features chair-led consultations the week of May 17th "to foster a discussion among Members respecting the rhythm of work and maturity of individual issues."

From 5 to 19

Lamy called on key Members to step up their small group consultations in order to tackle the specifics so that some “give and take” can take place. The remark came after the G-5 (U.S., EU, India, Brazil, and China) meeting in Paris on April 27-28 ended with no clear vision on the way forward, only that the group will expand to 19 delegations by including several Members from both developed and developing countries who play an important role in solving the outstanding remaining issues; countries such as Japan and Canada on sensitive products, Burkina Faso on cotton, Indonesia on SSM. The group is expected to meet the week of May 17th to brainstorm the way forward with the talks.

Lamy is well aware that a breakthrough is unlikely to happen overnight, but is willing to provide the group with “adequate time and space” to achieve consensus. “Of course, in due time, we all expect to hear more about these initiatives in the interest of transparency and inclusiveness,” Lamy told the full membership at the General Council. However, officials already expressed doubts as to whether this group will manage to find consensus, firstly because of its size but most importantly due to the rather large number of subjects it may have to deal with. That being said, the group is said to focus solely on process rather than substance at its week of May 17th meetings.

Upcoming Events

- Agriculture consultations (templates), May 17, 18 and 21, 2010
- 2010 OECD Forum May 26-27, 2010, Paris (France)
- APEC Trade Ministers Meeting, June 5-6, 2010, Sapporo, (Japan)
- OECD Global Forum on Trade, June 8-9, 2010, Paris (France)
- Regular Agriculture Committee, June 10-11, September 16-17, November 18-19, 2010
- G-20 Summit, June 26-27, 2010, Toronto (Canada)
- General Council, July 29-30, Oct. 6-7, Dec. 14-15, 2010
- WTO Public Forum, September 15-17, 2010
- G-20 Summit, November 11-12, 2010 Seoul, (South Korea)
- OECD Global Forum on Agriculture, November 29-30, 2010, Paris (France)

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