

Editorial: Second Straight Year without a July Ministerial Meeting

WTO Members are preparing for the summer break, which some may say without exaggeration, that has already started, given the pace with which the work is currently being conducted these days in Geneva.

This past week, Members gathered to continue discussions on non-agricultural market access (NAMA) where only the issue of non-tariff barriers (NTBs) had been tackled, leaving aside the burning questions on the sectoral negotiations for September's consultations.

In his concluding remarks, NAMA chairman, Luzius Wasescha, stressed that it was "easier to fix the level of ambition in the world football championship than in a trade negotiation" in an apparent reference to the now internationally famous octopus "Paul" which correctly predicted the winner in 8 World Cup matches, including the final. Some delegates have jokingly suggested consulting Paul to know when Doha agreement will be reached.

In the meantime, the NAMA chair urged delegates to announce when they plan to "surprise" the negotiating group by tabling new documents to advance discussions in September, since, as he put it, planned spontaneity was "still the preferred option of bureaucrats."

The week also provided an opportunity for the G-5 (Brazil, China, the EU, India and the U.S.) to debrief WTO Director General, Pascal Lamy, on how several negotiating topics should be addressed going forward.

It was reported that the five key players requested that the remaining outstanding issues be discussed at the small group level, rather than involve a larger group of Members such as the G-19 group (now 24 countries) of senior officials. One source said that G-5 Members agreed to each take the lead on specific issues to be discussed in small groups throughout this summer.

The U.S. seeks to continue its bilateral meetings with key emerging countries to find a solution which could open the way for a deal on modalities sometime next year. The U.S. has been encouraged in its quest by the EU business organization, BusinessEurop, which has called the EU Trade Commission to join the U.S. in calling on emerging countries to make additional market access concessions in order to unlock Doha's current stalemate.

Once again this year, the organization's July General Council, which traditionally wraps up the year's first half activities, would not serve as the basis for intensive ministerial negotiations with the aim to hammer a deal on modalities. Sources expect Lamy to simply report on progress achieved so far in the negotiating groups, provide time and space for the G-5 to go through their small group consultations and broadly outline plans for this upcoming autumn, including the second G-20 Summit in Seoul (Korea).



Upcoming Events

- General Council, July 29-30, Oct. 6-7, Dec.14-15, 2010
- WTO Public Forum, September 15-17, 2010
- Regular Agriculture Committee, September 16-17, November 18-19, 2010
- G-20 Summit, November 11-12, 2010 Seoul, (South Korea)
- OECD Global Forum on Agriculture, November 29-30, 2010, Paris (France)

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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