



All of Doha Development Agenda Now at Risk

World Trade Organization (WTO) Director-General, Roberto Azevêdo, warned Members against putting the whole Doha Development Agenda (DDA), as well as the entire WTO organization, at risk by allowing the current impasse concerning the implementation of trade facilitation (TF) to persist.

“[A]t present, the future is uncertain,” he said at a meeting of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development on September 22nd, adding that “many areas of our work may suffer a freezing effect, including the areas of greatest interest to developing countries, such as agriculture.”

In fact, the agriculture negotiations special session – chaired by New Zealand WTO Ambassador John Adank – was the latest group to experience a “freeze” in their discussion when the group met on September 23rd. Like the other pillars of the tripod (agriculture, industrial products market access (NAMA) and services), Members differed on how to move forward due to India’s decision to harvest TF and food security together by the end of 2014.

India, again, was alone in its position during the two hour meeting, where most officials called for the Bali Package to be implemented as agreed to at the 9th Ministerial Conference last December. They called on the TF text to be adopted within the next few days so that the full membership could continue working towards a work programme by the end of the year, one that would enable them to make further progress on the remainder of the DDA.

The need to tackle agricultural issues in the Doha Round has become even more pressing, Argentina said, given the possibility of an increase in Members’ domestic support due to falling agricultural prices. India, meanwhile, continues to insist on seeing TF and

a permanent solution on public stockholding agreed to simultaneously by the end of this year.

“Taking all of these views into account, my general conclusion as of now, is that, in the absence of a solution to the current impasse, there is no consensus on how work can be taken forward in this Committee,” Ambassador Adank told the full membership.

Officials now hope that the upcoming meeting between U.S. President Barack Obama and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, taking place in Washington the week of September 29th, will allow for a political solution to this impasse.

“If we solve this issue, I am confident that we will be able to look ahead and resume our efforts in the broader negotiating agenda,” Azevêdo said on Monday. “I sincerely hope that by early October we will find a way to put things back on track. With that we’ll have the engagement needed to face the hard issues – and very important issues – of the post-Bali agenda.”

Azevêdo is set to continue his consultations with Members throughout the week of September 29th. The goal remains to reach an agreement on both TF and food security before the October 6th informal meeting of the trade negotiations committee (TNC).

U.S.-JAPAN MINISTERIAL MEETING

In their latest attempt to narrow the gap in their bilateral negotiations, the U.S. and Japan met on September 23rd and 24th at the ministerial level to discuss their outstanding agriculture and autos issues. The two sides reported having “constructive working-level discussions” over the period but were unable to make further progress on key outstanding issues.

Following the Hanoi chief negotiators meeting, the U.S. Trade Representative’s office announced that Michael Froman will embark on a series of bilateral meetings

with many of his Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) counterparts in the weeks to come with the aim of advancing the negotiations. A meeting with the Japanese Minister for Economic and Fiscal Policy, Akira Amari, has been tagged as an important one as it is believed that an agreement between the U.S. and Japan would accelerate the TPP negotiations.

The U.S., meanwhile, stressed that it would continue to demonstrate a commitment to the level of ambition that all TPP countries agreed to attain when they entered negotiations. The two ministers are not expected to meet again anytime soon as they will consider next steps following consultations in their respective capitals.

This latest setback casts doubts over the 12 countries' ability to strike a deal in principal before the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in China. However, there may be some light at the end of the tunnel as the 12 TPP countries are expected to meet at the chief negotiators' level sometime during the second half of October in Australia. This latest gathering is expected to be immediately followed by a ministerial meeting on October 23-25.

KEY UPCOMING EVENTS

- WTO Public Forum, October 1–3,
- WTO Informal TNC, October 6
- TPP Chief Negotiator Meeting, Mid-Late October, Canberra (Australia – TBC)
- TPP Ministerial Meeting, October 23–25, Sydney (Australia – TBC)
- WTO General Council, October 21, December 10–12
- APEC Leaders' Summit, November 10-11 Beijing (China)
- WTO Regular Agriculture Committee, November 13-14
- G-20 Leaders Summit, November 15-16, Brisbane (Australia)

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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