



Geneva WATCH

An overview of the bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral trade negotiations

Charles Akande, Editor

Preparations for MC10 Ministerial at Critical Juncture

World Trade Organization (WTO) Members continued their intense consultations this past week at the negotiating group level with the goal of achieving agreement on a package for the WTO's 10th Ministerial Conference (MC10) being held in Nairobi (Kenya) from December 15–18.

Despite the emerging consensus that something around export competition – particularly the elimination of export subsidies – along with development elements could form the majority of the outcome of the MC10, discussions on these issues have not advanced much.

WTO Director General, Roberto Azevêdo, believes that these elements would represent real progress in the negotiations as they would have major economic and developmental impact on Members, even if the MC10 package cannot be considered the true endpoint of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA).

“We must strive to do much more in the future,” Azevêdo said in his speech at the Arab Trade Ministers meeting in Riyadh (Saudi Arabia), on October 14th.

However, reaching a deal, even on this small package, before heading to Nairobi won't be an easy task. The divergences run deep and are perceptible in other areas like services, where most delegations agreed that a package focusing on developing transparency disciplines in their domestic services regulations is the most realistic and doable way forward, while others expressed disappointment with the downgraded ambition for an outcome in services.

Azevêdo, who will attend meetings of the African Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP) trade ministers in Brussels the week of October 19th, has appointed three Ambassadors – Ambassador Gabriel Duque of Colombia, Ambassador Harald Neple of Norway and Ambassador Stephen Karau of Kenya – to facilitate consultations with Members and collect their views on “the structure of the potential Nairobi outcome document”.

“Many say that if there is no consensus to end the Doha Round then it will simply continue – and that we should state this clearly. The other side says that if we do not deliver Doha by Nairobi then that will be it – even without a formal statement affirming its demise, the Doha Round will be over for all practical purposes and we will see no further engagement on Doha after Nairobi. Clearly these views will be extremely difficult to reconcile,” Azevêdo told the audience in Riyadh.

Surge in TFA ratifications

Meanwhile, Azevêdo can take consolation in the 50th ratification of the trade facilitation agreement (TFA) after Macedonia deposited its instrument of acceptance on October 19th. The number of ratifications received by the WTO for the new TFA has increased sharply since the middle of the year, the WTO secretariat reported, noting that the number has tripled since June 11th.

The chair of the Preparatory Committee on Trade Facilitation (PCTF), Ambassador Esteban Conejos of the Philippines, described the increasing number of ratifications as a “very welcome development” as he expects to collect a substantial number of new ratifications in the coming months.

The prospect of having the TFA ratified by Nairobi would be a welcome boost for the Ministerial conference, sources said. Two-thirds of the WTO's membership is needed to ratify the TFA in order for the agreement to take legal effect. So far around 45% of the support needed to bring the TFA into force has been reached.

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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Legal Deposit: National Library of Canada, ISSN 1496-9254



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