



# Geneva WATCH

An overview of the bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral trade negotiations

Charles Akande, Editor

## Brainstorming the Post-Nairobi Work Program

**The World Trade Organization's (WTO) Director General, Roberto Azevêdo, convened an informal heads of delegation meeting on February 10<sup>th</sup> – the first gathering of the full membership since the Nairobi Ministerial Conference (MC10) – to discuss the organization's future work.**

Aside from welcoming the MC-10 results and stressing the importance of implementing the outcomes achieved there (and in Bali), delegates insisted on two major points:

- 1) The acknowledgment that there had been some shortcomings pertaining to the negotiating process in Nairobi, Kenya.
- 2) The next steps and the willingness to explore a “two track approach”.

The need to improve the negotiating process in Geneva was again felt in Nairobi as Members criticized the fact that some issues were left unresolved while at MC10. They also pointed out the need for a more inclusive process, after denouncing the small group negotiations that took place in Nairobi between five countries (Brazil, China, EU, India, and the U.S.), leaving other ministers grumpy, waiting for the results.

To avoid duplicating this in the future, as well as the fact that the MC10 chairperson – Kenyan Trade Minister, Amina Mohamed – had to present a set of issues on a “take it or leave it basis”, it was suggested that ambassadors need to step outside their comfort zone when negotiating in Geneva.

One idea shared by all is to have all decisions ready before the next Ministerial Conference and to have Ministers involved throughout the

negotiating process, for example by having them making decisions on the sidelines of ministerial level gatherings, such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and G-20 meetings, to advance the negotiations.

### A Period of Careful Reflection Needed

With respect to the next steps, Members agree that they need to be creative and pragmatic, but shared the view that they should not rush into making a decision as to how to tackle the remainder of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA). A period of careful reflection is needed.

However there is a commitment to explore a two-track approach; one that deals with the current issues (domestic support and market access etc.), while exploring how new topics could be addressed by the WTO. Many Members insisted on the fact that these new issues should not be tackled ahead of the current DDA matters.

The only issues for which Members have been given a clear mandate coming out of the MC10 are cotton, special safeguard mechanism (SSM), and food security. These matters will be taken up by the agriculture negotiating group chaired by New Zealand's Ambassador Vangelis Vitalis. For the remainder of the DDA, more discussion is needed.

What matters most is to preserve the WTO's negotiating function, Brazil said, adding that it has no objection to some issues being tackled on a plurilateral basis, reminding others that the results won't differ much from the multilateral process if done on a most favored nation (MFN) basis. Brazil is strongly committed to addressing the DDA issues, particularly agriculture market access, sanitary and phyto-sanitary

measures (SPS), and technical barriers to trade (TBT). Others, including Argentina and Uruguay, listed agriculture among their priorities.

For India, the DDA issues remain paramount. Moving forward on new topics without finalizing the remainder of the Doha Round would be unacceptable.

The U.S., for its part, repeated that Nairobi provided an opportunity for all Members to engage in a new way. Japan agreed, stressing that it remains open to exploring new negotiating avenues.

Nobody rejected the Nairobi outcome.

**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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