

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
Seventh Session
Geneva, 30 November - 2 December 2009

SEVENTH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Chairman's Summary

The Seventh Ministerial Conference of the WTO has brought together nearly 3,000 delegates representing all 153 Members as well as 56 Observers.

This wide and active participation has demonstrated the importance WTO stakeholders attach to the system in these challenging times. The financial and economic crisis has been the backdrop to our meeting. Recognizing the crucial part that the WTO has played in mitigating the effects of the crisis, Ministers focused on what the Organization can do now to help in the recovery. The WTO needs to come out of the crisis strengthened.

Members expressed a wide range of views and priorities, and I cannot attempt to list them all. This is a non-exhaustive summary of key points that I have taken from the very substantive discussions of the past two and a half days.

First, **the Round**. There was strong convergence on the importance of trade and the Doha Round to economic recovery and poverty alleviation in developing countries. The **development dimension** should remain central to the Round and particular attention should be paid to issues of importance to developing countries.

Ministers reaffirmed the need to conclude the Round in 2010 and for a stock-taking exercise to take place in the first quarter of next year. There was support for asking Senior Officials to continue to work to map the road towards that point. Gaps remain on substance and there was wide acknowledgment of the need for leadership and engagement on the remaining specific issues over the coming weeks.

There was wide support for building on progress made to date. There was also support for not attempting to reopen stabilized texts. It was pointed out that while priority is being given to Agriculture and NAMA, it is important to advance on other areas on the agenda, including Services, Rules and Trade Facilitation.

LDC-specific issues were underlined as needing particular attention, including Duty-Free Quota-Free market access, cotton, and the LDC Waiver for Services. The particular needs of **Small and Vulnerable Economies** were also emphasized.

There was broad agreement that the growing number of **bilateral and regional trade agreements** is an issue for the multilateral trading system, and that there is a need to ensure that the two approaches to trade opening continue to complement each other. Some support was expressed for the eventual convergence of the two approaches. However, the idea of extending to all Members benefits offered in a regional context was questioned by some.

There were suggestions that while the WTO RTA transparency mechanism had worked quite well, there is still room for improvement, through making the mechanism permanent, highlighting better the common elements in different RTAs and introducing an annual review.

There was strong convergence on the importance of **accessions** in broadening and strengthening the WTO and on the importance of technical assistance at all stages of the accession process. Many stressed the need to adhere to the 2002 guidelines for LDC accession. There was broad support for the suggestion that there should be a sharing of experiences, particularly those of the recently acceded Members. There was, though, some divergence as to how to advance accessions, whether through closer collective action or through the usual practice of giving priority to bilateral channels.

There was wide recognition that providing market access to developing countries and LDCs is not enough on its own. **Capacity-building** was seen as vital to addressing supply-side constraints. The importance of keeping up the momentum of **Aid for Trade**, including the Enhanced Integrated Framework, was stressed. There was wide agreement on the need to continue actively mobilizing resources and to keep up monitoring implementation of commitments.

Ministers had a wide-ranging discussion on enhancing the institutional effectiveness of the WTO. Its **monitoring and analytical work** was widely seen to have been of particular value in helping to stave off protectionist responses to the crisis. There was substantial convergence on the need to improve notifications as well as data collection, analysis and dissemination.

High value continues to be placed by members on **transparency and inclusiveness** in the WTO. Improving the institution's effectiveness should not compromise this principle.

The value of the **Dispute Settlement System** was underlined by many participants, with some urging that it be made more responsive to the needs and circumstances of poorer and smaller Members.

Numerous comments were made on other **current and future issues** facing the WTO. Climate change was raised by many. The contribution the WTO can make through removing barriers to trade in environmental goods and services was widely endorsed. There were also warnings against "green protectionism". Food security and energy security were also highlighted. Concern was also voiced about the effect of private standards on trade, especially for developing countries. Other items suggested for consideration included government procurement, competition and investment, though reservations were also expressed.

There was broad agreement that the WTO must remain credible in the face of emerging challenges. There were calls for deepening the WTO's relationship with other relevant international organizations, while respecting the WTO's mandates.

It was widely acknowledged that the importance of the WTO extends beyond the Round. It was also noted that finishing the Round - a stimulus package with limited fiscal cost - is vital in order to ensure that the WTO remains relevant.

Finally, I would like to offer my own assessment that this Conference, organized in keeping with the principles of full participation, inclusiveness and transparency (FIT), has itself made a positive statement about the WTO.

I would like to thank the Secretariat for their hard work in preparing this ministerial, and the Swiss authorities for their co-operation and assistance. Most of all I would like to thank all of you, Ministers and Delegates, who have participated so actively and constructively. I am sure we all look forward to our next get-together in 2011.
