



SINGAPORE ISSUES IN THE WTO: WHAT DO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES SAY?

At the insistence of the EU and Japan, a decision will be made at the next WTO ministerial meeting in Cancun, Mexico on whether to begin negotiations on the so-called 'Singapore Issues': investment, competition policy, transparency in government procurement and trade facilitation.

Patricia Hewitt, the UK Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, has said 'As the leader of the UK delegation in the Mexico talks this autumn, I will not accept any proposal we believe will damage the prospects of developing countries'.¹ On 7 July, speaking at the Commonwealth Trade Forum, she added that it was not the British government's role to speak for developing countries but to 'amplify their voice'. This briefing provides her with a summary of developing country views on the Singapore Issues expressed since the beginning of June 2003.²

Key Finding:

Since the beginning of June 2003, 77 developing countries (including over half of the WTO's developing country members) have said they do not want negotiations on the Singapore Issues to be agreed in Cancun.

DECLARATION of SECOND LDC TRADE MINISTERS' MEETING, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 31 May – 2 June 2003

The 49 Least Developed Countries called on the WTO members to continue studying the new issues, rather than begin negotiations at Cancun:

'We, the Ministers responsible for trade of the Least Developed Countries

15. *Invite* the attention of the Members of the WTO to the particular vulnerability of the least developed countries and the special structural difficulties they face and call upon the WTO bodies and Fifth Ministerial Conference to agree on:

xi. Continuing with the technical work and studies to clarify the implications of the Singapore Issues on the development aspirations of LDCs'

AFRICA TRADE MINISTERS' MEETING, Grand Baie, Mauritius, 19-20 June 2003

The conference of 53 African Trade Ministers called on the WTO members to continue studying the new issues, rather than begin negotiations at Cancun:

'We, the Ministers of Trade of the Member States of the African Union (AU)

12. Recognize the complexity and importance of the Singapore issues and note that WTO Members do not have a common understanding on how these issues should be dealt with procedurally and substantively. Taking into account the potential serious implications of these issues on our economies, we call for the process of clarification to be continued.'

¹ Guardian, 23 June 2003

² Research compiled by Hannah Fogell and Duncan Green, CAFOD, 10 July 2003

WTO SUBMISSION BY GROUP OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, 4 JULY 2003

Echoing the Dhaka and Mauritius declarations, a number of developing countries opposed the EU's attempt to win agreement to begin negotiations based on extremely vague procedural modalities, and added:

"the exercise of clarification of certain elements relating to four Singapore issues is still on going. Differences of opinion still abound, even amongst proponents. It is therefore clear that more discussion and clarification would be necessary so that Members are in a position to look at the issue of modalities for each of the Singapore issues in an informed manner."

WTO WORKING GROUP ON TRADE AND INVESTMENT, GENEVA, JUNE 2003

At this meeting, India, China, Malaysia and Indonesia added their voice to the developing country opposition to beginning negotiations on the Singapore Issues, representing not just four countries, but almost half the world's population.

Countries

LDC TRADE MINISTERS:

Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Rwanda, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Sudan, Togo, Tuvalu, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu, Yemen and Zambia

AFRICA TRADE MINISTERS

Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, The Comoros, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

WTO SUBMISSION BY GROUP OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, 4 JULY 2003

Bangladesh, Cuba, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Venezuela, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

WTO WORKING GROUP ON TRADE AND INVESTMENT

India, China, Malaysia and Indonesia

Total number of developing countries opposed to beginning negotiations: 77

Of these, total number of WTO members: 53 (over half the WTO's developing country membership)

Total number of WTO observers:³ 14

³ These countries are not yet members of the WTO, but are seeking accession