

PRESS RELEASE

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TRADE NEGOTIATIONS COMMITTEE

DG Supachai urges acceleration of work on Doha Agenda

The WTO's Trade Negotiations Committee, which is responsible for co-ordinating the trade negotiations under the Doha Development Agenda, met today to review progress to date and discuss the future negotiating agenda. Following the start of the meeting, the first to be chaired by Director-General Supachai Panitchpakdi, the Director-General issued the following statement:

"Our Fifth Ministerial Conference in Cancún will take place in less than one year, and we have much to do between now and then. We all know that we must make rapid substantive progress in all areas of the Doha Development Agenda if we are to have a successful conference. I am confident that we can do this, and I intend to take an active part in this collective undertaking.

"This conference is set to act as a mid-term review. This means that by then we will need a clear picture of what is achievable across the negotiating agenda. Only on that basis will ministers be able to provide the necessary additional political guidance in order to conclude the DDA Work Programme successfully by the 1 January 2005 deadline.

"From the reports given today by the chairpersons heading our negotiating groups, and from the discussions which followed those reports it is clear we have made a reasonably good start, but much remains to be done and time is running quickly.

"I am concerned that the positions of some delegations have not been sufficiently clarified. This meeting of the TNC marks the start of a new phase of the negotiations — the phase of substantive engagement. Only by accelerating our work, where necessary producing and discussing concrete proposals, can we make real progress across the board. Our work needs to be directed not only towards meeting individual key deadlines, but also towards building a sense of the negotiations as a whole.

"December represents a set of important deadlines concerning matters related to implementation, special and differential treatment for developing countries and a solution to the problem of supplying pharmaceuticals in those countries which lack sufficient manufacturing capacity. These issues are of great importance to developing countries. We need to continue moving on these issues, so that they become part of our forward process, not an obstacle to it.

"I would also like to underline the importance of the deadlines in the period from March to May 2003. During this period we will face deadlines in the negotiations on Agriculture, Services, Non-agricultural Market Access and Dispute Settlement. Many of us believe that what happens then will

define the rest of our process. We will face an uphill battle at Cancún if we do not grapple successfully with these intermediate deadlines.

"It is important we meet all of these deadlines. But a deadline is not an end in itself. Deadlines are important because they allow us to measure how we are advancing. And we all know we must advance the substance of the negotiations progressively across all areas of the negotiating agenda as a whole.

"You should expect the TNC to be more active. In line with this, I will be an activist as TNC Chairman — working closely with the Chairpersons to support and help them where I think it may be useful. I will also be active in consulting with delegations as we prepare for the important issues on the table in December.

"A successful outcome for the Doha Development Agenda is essential for the future of our societies. A larger degree of openness and predictability in international relations can only come about if we have the same set of rules and if we set our sights on similar objectives. That is precisely what this Organization can offer.

"The Doha Development Agenda was launched in a world economic situation which was widely regarded as being weak. It has not improved since then, and the outlook is uncertain in many ways. This is why it is even more important to deliver on this Round. The future prospects of many, many people depend on it."

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