

PRESS RELEASE

PRESS/342
28 May 2003

(03-2865)

DOHA DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Supachai praises negotiators' efforts in market access talks, urges governments to work toward agreement

Director-General Supachai Panitchpakdi today praised negotiators from WTO Member Governments for the progress they have made in negotiations to reduce barriers to trade in manufactured products but urged governments to apply greater effort to narrow differences and agree on the framework for continuing work.

Dr. Supachai expressed some disappointment that governments had not succeeded in meeting the timetable they had set themselves (31 May 2003) for agreeing the framework for negotiations in non-agricultural market access (NAMA). But he stressed that good progress had been made so far and that agreement on the modalities is within reach provided governments build on this work.

"Though the timetable has not been met, we should not be downcast. We need to put these negotiations into the right perspective. Agreeing on the modalities is perhaps the most difficult part of any negotiation. Good work has been done and there is every indication that further progress will be made. The modalities paper put forward by NAMA Chairman Pierre-Louis Girard forms a good basis for continuing negotiations. The text is ambitious and it also recognizes the special needs of developing countries. This text provides the right elements for reaching agreement in this vital area of our work by the 1 January 2005 deadline," said the Director-General.

Work on reducing barriers to trade in industrial products is part of the Doha Development Agenda, a broad round of trade negotiations, that also includes negotiations in seven other areas. The Doha talks were launched by trade ministers in Doha, Qatar, in November 2001 and are scheduled to finish by 1 January 2005.

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