

Press Statement: G-10 Ministerial Meeting, Geneva, 30 November 2009

Ministers of the G-10 met in Geneva today (Monday 30 November 2009) ahead of the 7th Session of the WTO Ministerial conference that will start this afternoon. They assessed the state of play of the DDA negotiations and their priorities in the negotiations on agriculture.

In the context of the current global financial and economic crisis, G-10 Ministers reiterated their commitment to a successful and rapid conclusion by 2010 in all the areas of the single undertaking, the first step for agriculture being achieved through an agreement on the modalities. They stressed their commitment to a strong multilateral trading system and to open markets as two important tools to help to overcome the world economic crisis.

G-10 Ministers appreciated the progress made in the agriculture negotiations to date and encouraged the Chair of the agriculture negotiations, Ambassador David Walker, to continue the good work in a transparent and inclusive process. They showed confidence in the Chair's ability to help bridging the remaining gaps among WTO members' positions. However, G-10 Ministers expressed concern on the lack of substantial progress in many of the other areas of the DDA negotiations since December 2008. They stressed that more serious efforts have to be made by the Membership in order to reach a balanced outcome across the different areas of the single undertaking. Recalling the common objective of finalizing the DDA in 2010, G-10 Ministers ask the other Ministers to consider a stock taking exercise in early 2010.

G-10 Ministers acknowledged the growing awareness among the WTO-membership of taking food security into account in the disciplines for trade in agriculture. They noted the importance of both open markets and increased agricultural production and productivity taking into account the diverse conditions in each country endorsed at the FAO World Summit on Food Security in Rome, which confirms the G-10 approach on non trade concerns. G-10 Ministers indicated that G-10 Members have always shown good will in trying to achieve a reasonable balance between liberalizing agricultural markets across the board and the need to accommodate Members' specific domestic situation and concerns. However, they noted that the steady increase in the level of ambition in the negotiations on agriculture has put G-10 Members in difficult domestic political situations and left them with little room for manoeuvre. G-10 Ministers therefore reaffirmed their needs and priorities which are the opposition to the introduction of a tariff cap, achieving appropriate flexibilities in the number, self designation including the creation of new tariff quotas and treatment of sensitive products. Concerns remained regarding the disciplines for the SSG. They also reaffirmed the need to address, through trade solutions, the specific concerns of net food importing developing countries.

It is against this background that Ministers concurred that an agreement can only be found by taking into account the main concerns of the G-10 members and by arriving at a balanced outcome in the three pillars of the agriculture negotiations. G10 Ministers reasserted their willingness to continue working on the basis of the draft December 2008 modalities text. Final agreement of modalities would be dependent on the accommodation of G10 concerns in outstanding areas. They emphasised that any selective reopening of stabilised areas of the draft modalities text would lead to unravelling of the delicate balance after eight years of negotiations.

G-10 Ministers renewed their determination to work constructively with all other WTO Members to establish balanced and mutually acceptable modalities for further agricultural reform, and expressed their readiness to meet their counterparts, bilaterally or plurilaterally, during the Ministerial Meeting. They urged all Members to undertake the necessary efforts to help to bridge the gaps and to bring the round to a successful conclusion by 2010.