

THE DOHA ROUND: SETTING A DEADLINE, DEFINING A FINAL DEAL

Executive Summary

In November 2010 the heads of government of Germany, Great Britain, Indonesia and Turkey created an Experts Group to report on the priority actions that have to be taken to combat protectionism and to boost global trade. The urgency of this task was underlined by a request for the completion of an interim report on the completion of the Doha Development Agenda by January 2011. The reason for this urgency is readily apparent. Even by the standards of earlier trade rounds, many of which took years to complete, the DDA has been particularly disappointing in the progress of the negotiations taking ten years to reach this point. If the DDA is not completed by the end of this year it will at best lie in the doldrums for a prolonged period and such an outcome will be greatly damaging to the global economy.

This failure has occurred notwithstanding the great efforts of Pascal Lamy, the Director General of the WTO. It reflects a failure of global leadership in some quarters that is difficult to comprehend for various reasons. For one thing, even though there is a real need for a final push, the finishing line is close and much has already been achieved. Indeed what is already on offer is a package that would provide a global economic stimulus of hundreds of billions of dollars in new trade annually. Everyone would gain - both developed and developing countries alike and the latter particularly so. Apart from the opportunity that will be lost should the DDA not be satisfactorily concluded, such a failure would cause serious damage to the credibility of the WTO and this would damage multilateralism more generally. And yet compromise on specifics seems to inhibit decision making in the general national and international interest.

This state of affairs demands active intervention at head of government level. It also demands an absolute deadline for the negotiations. As the Interim Report states, this deadline should be the 31st December 2011.

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