

Trade Negotiations Committee, 7 Dec 2012

Statement by Angelos Pangratis,

Ambassador of the European Union

- This is a particularly appropriate moment for a common reflection concerning our negotiating agenda. We are exactly halfway between MC8 and MC9. Indeed in one year, we will all be in Indonesia at the 9th Ministerial Conference. Now is the time to think about what exactly we would like to be doing there. In the EU, we profoundly believe that all the members of this Organisation, we share a strong interest and we have a profound responsibility to deliver concrete outcomes at MC9, working in the directions that were given to us by our ministers at MC8. These outcomes need to be meaningful, so as to demonstrate that we can again achieve multilaterally, results that matter. This is obviously a challenge of profound importance for the prospects of DDA and for the overall credibility of the MTS.
- In some ways, this year has come out to be more positive than most of us would have expected when the last Ministerial Conference came to a close. Just one year ago at MC8 our Ministers admitted that the DDA negotiations were in an impasse and agreed to explore different negotiating approaches. They committed to advance negotiations where progress can be achieved. It is encouraging to see that we have not wasted this past year and we find ourselves now, engaged in meaningful negotiations in several areas, and that there is, on the part of the vast majority of Members, a prevailing feeling of responsibility and commitment to move forward. It is worth remembering for a moment, how we started out slowly this year and how the bottom-up step-by-step approach that has been taken has proven itself appropriate in many ways and how we managed collectively at some stage of the process to inject a positive approach to our work, which in fact allowed modest but real progress to take place and guided us to our current negotiating environment. We will need more of this positive approach in the coming months. Progress achieved is fragile; the road ahead is long and the time to MC9 is in fact very short.
- The objective before us seems clear. We want and indeed need to reach an agreement on a number of DDA areas, while not losing sight of the overall DDA. What these areas are, at least at general level, I think is becoming clear to everyone: Trade Facilitation, the Monitoring Mechanism, the Agreement Specific Proposals, some LDC-oriented issues, the DSU



European
Union

MISSION TO THE
WORLD TRADE
ORGANIZATION

GENEVA



review and certain agriculture elements are certainly doable, and would entail gains for all members, particularly developing ones. They could be complemented by the ITA review. As always however, the devil lies in the details.

- On Trade Facilitation, negotiations are moving forward, albeit not always as fast as we would wish. We have just finished a productive round of discussions in the NG which clarified a number of questions; this work will nevertheless need to accelerate. The agreement itself is highly complex and necessitates a real effort in order to arrive at an advanced text. If we do not invest time and energy now into resolving our differences, we may find ourselves in a situation where not enough time is left before MC9 to complete a satisfactory text. In particular, we need to address shortly some key political aspects of the agreement – and notably the section related to special and differential treatment. On the practical side, I would like to underline the EU's readiness to continue providing technical assistance on Trade Facilitation. In order to advance however, an effort is needed regarding the needs assessments. In this regard the EU reiterates the need for further cooperation with the Secretariat.
- On the Monitoring Mechanism and the Agreement Specific Proposals, over the last few months the Chair has spared no effort to better delineate what we try to achieve and bring positions closer together. The EU is ready to continue to constructively engage in these negotiations and calls on Members to do the same.
- On agriculture, there are new proposals on the table that will need to be discussed in detail in the coming months. We welcome the constructive views and attitudes being expressed and the openness to sit down and engage in negotiations. We should not be fooled however into thinking that - concerning proposals on the table or others eventually to come - there are no limits to what can be done or that the context and complexity of certain compromises can simply be ignored. The EU will remain constructive here, on par with others, and will work to find solutions that satisfy everyone.
- Addressing LDC issues will of course be high on our agenda. We have all proven our dedication to these issues, which was exemplified in July with the agreement that we all reached on the revision of the LDC accession guidelines. This positive spirit has spilled over into the actual accession process of LDC. It now needs to continue with a view to preparing further meaningful deliverables acceptable to all.
- Finally, on the DSU review, negotiations are continuing at a good pace. The Chair and delegations are now engaging in a new phase of discussions which we hope will lead towards an agreement on the review. The EU will engage also in these discussions in a constructive manner.
- Overall, Mr Chairman, we recognise that eventual MC9 outcomes will need to meet some expectations for everyone so that each Member can go home as a winner. We are facing two interrelated challenges: first, we need to keep our expectations and demands at reasonable, realistic and doable levels and accept a limited but relevant and significant outcome. At the same time we need to be clear that a successful outcome at MC9 is only a first step, a stepping stone towards the remaining DDA issues. The entire agenda clearly remains the objective of the EU.

A successful MC9 appears today clearly as a necessary precondition for the conclusion, at a later stage, of the whole Round. We are ready to work for this. And we believe this is in the more profound, shared interest among all of us.