



MEDIA RELEASE

DR CRAIG EMERSON

Minister for Trade

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OECD Trade Ministers' meeting open to taking two bites at the Doha cherry

Twenty key members of the World Trade Organization have kept the Doha round of global trade negotiations alive by charting a new course at a meeting in Paris chaired by Australian Trade Minister Craig Emerson.

Negotiations in Geneva for the Doha round had stalled, owing to what WTO Director-General, Pascal Lamy, had described as 'unbridgeable gaps'.

Faced with the option of conceding defeat, the Paris meeting agreed that the 20 countries would press ahead in seeking a successful conclusion of the round.

The encouraging discussions came against the background of a report released by the OECD and the WTO on movements in trade barriers during the last six months which disturbingly reported an increase in protectionism.

Dr Emerson warned: "What a tragedy it would be if the world, having successfully resisted protectionist pressures during the deepest global recession since the Great Depression, were to succumb to them during the recovery."

"The latest report, identifying a rise in protectionism, should worry all countries committed to trade liberalization."

Dr Emerson said Ministers acknowledged the negotiations were deadlocked and, while retaining their aspirations for a highly-liberalising Doha result, supported a down-payment of agreements for the WTO Trade Ministers' meeting in December.

Dr Emerson said an encouraging result in December would give confidence that further progress was achievable and that the round could be successfully completed.

"Encouragingly, no country at the meeting wanted to abandon the round or push it off to the never-never," Dr Emerson said.

Discussion will now start in Geneva to identify issues that could be included in any December down-payment.

The meeting agreed that any December 2011 down-payment should improve access to world markets by the Least Developed Countries, and that further trade-creating measures should be agreed in December if possible.

A pathway to resolving the most contentious issues that had caused the impasse, such as manufacturing tariffs, would be developed in coming months so that they, too, could be negotiated, but over a longer time frame.

Dr Emerson said: “A down-payment in December could generate much-needed momentum for the stalled negotiations while giving confidence that the most controversial issues can be tackled in a second stage.

“We may need to take two bites at the Doha cherry.

“A set of trade-creating initiatives for December would demonstrate a genuine commitment to the multilateral trading system as well as charting a course for the resolution of outstanding issues,” Dr Emerson said.

Dr Emerson said the meeting agreed to retain the so-called “single undertaking”, where nothing was agreed until everything was agreed, but that the Doha mandate agreed in 2001 contemplated the possibility of a down-payment.

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