



# MEDIA RELEASE

## DR CRAIG EMERSON

Minister for Trade

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11 September 2011

### **Australia welcomes Cairns Group's frank assessment of Doha**

Australia has welcomed the frank and honest assessment of Cairns Group members that the Doha Round of global trade negotiations is in deep trouble.

Cairns Group Chair, Australian Trade Minister Craig Emerson, said the Doha Round could be saved only if member countries accepted it was on life support and needed urgent attention.

At their meeting in Saskatoon, Canada, Cairns Group members canvassed four options for the Doha Round: declaring it dead; pressing on with the current approach; putting it into a deep freeze for possible revival later; and taking a fresh approach to negotiations.

"Cairns Group members unanimously agreed that only by adopting a fresh approach could the Round be saved," Dr Emerson said.

"And importantly, invited special guests, including the United States and the European Union, concurred."

Dr Emerson said Australia was willing to play a leading role in developing a new course for the Doha negotiations.

"You can't fix a problem unless you recognise you've got one, and the Cairns Group has pressed the alarm buzzer in the emergency ward," Dr Emerson said.

Proposals for a new course for the Doha Round will need to be discussed ahead of the annual meeting of World Trade Organization Ministers in Geneva in December.

Food security was also discussed at the Saskatoon meeting, with the Cairns Group agreeing that market mechanisms provided the best hope of matching world food supplies with rising demand from a strongly growing world population that would add two billion people to the earth by 2050.

"Already one billion people go to bed hungry every night and many will join them if we don't get this right," Dr Emerson said.

"The Cairns Group agreed that greater trade and investment flows among countries would increase global food production, while trade and investment barriers would deprive hundreds of millions of the world's poor of basic nutrition," Dr Emerson said.

The meeting agreed there was no better time to eliminate agricultural export subsidies and strictly limit farm subsidies, with budgetary pressures in the United States and Europe making farm subsidies legitimate candidates for spending cuts.

“And at this time of high food prices - when export subsidies are low - their permanent elimination is opportune,” Dr Emerson said.

The Cairns Group meeting agreed that any quarantine and food-labelling policies must be based on science and not be for the purpose of restricting trade.

At the meeting, Malaysia expressed its opposition to food-labelling proposals that would adversely affect its palm oil exports.

Dr Emerson thanked farm groups, chaired by National Farmers’ Federation President Jock Laurie, for working closely with the Cairns Group over the two-day meeting.

“Jock Laurie’s leadership ensured the deliberations of Cairns Group members were informed by the best possible on-the-ground advice,” Dr Emerson said.

All Cairns Group members and invited guest countries supported Russia’s accession to the World Trade Organization later this year, for which the Russian delegation was most appreciative.

Dr Emerson discussed the resumption of kangaroo meat exports to Russia with Agriculture Minister Dr Elena Skrynnik.

“Russia has agreed in principle to the resumption of kangaroo meat imports, subject to the negotiation of a memorandum of understanding,” Dr Emerson announced.

In return, the Australian Government would grant market economy status to Russia ahead of its accession to the World Trade Organization.

“Russia and Australia are working hard on a final agreement,” Dr Emerson said.

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