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Trade issues

BALI, Indonesia, 3 and 6 December 2013

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Main results of the Council

*The Council, meeting in the margins of the 9th **WTO ministerial conference in Bali**, Indonesia, was briefed by the Commission on developments. It shared the Commission's positive assessment of the overall package achieved.*

The ministerial conference made progress on the Doha round of trade negotiations, adopting decisions on trade facilitation, agriculture, cotton and development and least-developed-country issues.

Concerning the post-Bali work programme, the Council approved the draft WTO ministerial declaration, and in particular the objective of concluding the Doha round. It reconfirmed the importance of achieving a comprehensive, ambitious and balanced final outcome within and across all areas of the Doha Development Agenda.

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OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

none

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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's Internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

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Mr Dacian CIOLOȘ

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ITEMS DEBATED**9th World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference****First set of conclusions:**

Meeting on 3 December at the opening of the conference, the Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council reiterates the EU's commitment to the multilateral trading system and the crucial importance of reaching an ambitious and balanced outcome at the 9th WTO Ministerial Conference. Such a successful outcome would create positive momentum for the resumption of negotiations on other Doha Development Agenda (DDA) issues in 2014.
2. The Conference should reach a political understanding on the text of an ambitious and legally binding Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), which will bring substantial benefits to all WTO members and will be a driver for world trade and growth. The TFA should be adopted as soon as possible after the Conference in 2014.
3. The TFA will be of particular benefit to developing countries, by better integrating them into international trade and global value chains. The EU remains committed to assist the developing countries most in need, especially LDCs, in the implementation of the TFA. It acknowledges the need for time-limited flexibilities for certain developing countries. The more advanced developing countries should declare that they will not make use of these flexibilities, or make very limited use of them mainly by means of short transitional periods before full implementation is achieved.
4. A satisfactory outcome on the TFA will allow the EU to give its agreement on the overall package, including other DDA issues, as set out below.
5. Agriculture is a key element of the DDA which can only be addressed within a final outcome encompassing other areas of the DDA mandate. A limited number of issues however could be part of the outcome of the Conference. Food security should be addressed through a time-limited due restraint clause, with specific conditions and safeguards agreed by WTO members to ensure transparency and avoid trade distortions. The EU could also accept the improvement of the administration of Tariff Rate Quotas, underlining that it would be more beneficial if applied by all WTO members.
6. In the area of export competition, the EU has already made tremendous efforts in recent years to reduce its use of export subsidies, which have not been matched by other WTO members across all aspects of export competition. The EU is willing to support a political declaration of the Conference which takes note of the progress achieved, underlines the importance of transparency and reaffirms the need to address all export competition issues in a balanced way in the context of future DDA negotiations.

7. In addition to the important development dimension of the Trade Facilitation Agreement, the Monitoring Mechanism on special and differential treatment would contribute to the integration of developing countries into the multilateral trading system. As regards the LDCs, together with the decisions already agreed on LDC's accession guidelines and the TRIPS transition period extension, the draft WTO ministerial decisions on the operationalisation of the services waiver, on preferential rules of origin, on duty free quota free market access and on cotton would provide for a meaningful and ambitious development package for the Conference.
8. In this context, the Council warmly welcomes the accession of Yemen to the WTO and recalls its commitment to facilitate LDCs accessions to the WTO.
9. The EU emphasises the importance of a balanced revision of the Information Technology Agreement. The EU looks forward to the rapid entry into force of the revised Government Procurement Agreement, which will in particular allow for more transparent rules and new market access opportunities.
10. The Council supports the Commission in its efforts in order to make the Conference a success. It will assess the progress made with a view to reaching a balanced outcome in line with these conclusions. To this end, the Commission will regularly report to the Council on progress in the negotiations and submit wherever needed drafts for EU negotiating positions on texts discussed within the WTO. It will present to the Council the WTO negotiated texts before their final adoption by the WTO bodies."

Second set of Conclusions:

Meeting on 6 December, the Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council was informed by the Commission of latest developments in the 9th WTO Ministerial Conference. It shared the Commission's positive assessment of the overall package achieved.
2. In particular, the EU welcomed the results on the draft Trade Facilitation Agreement. The Council took note of the fact that the provision of the TFA on traffic in transit does not affect existing national regulations or bilateral or multilateral transport arrangements, including traffic permit requirement systems. The Council also approved the outcome attained on the Monitoring Mechanism, on the management of Tariff Rate Quotas and on food security, as well as for the draft WTO Ministerial Decisions on LDCs (preferential rules of origin, cotton, operationalization of the services waiver and duty free quota free access).
3. The EU considers that the adoption of the three decisions on the Monitoring Mechanism, on the management of Tariff Rate Quotas and on Food Security are part of a global outcome of the Bali package composed of three pillars, concerning the agreement on trade facilitation and the decisions on agriculture and development. This process will be completed in due time with the adoption of further decisions as appropriate.
4. The EU will follow this up in accordance with its internal procedures and without prejudice to the division of competences between the EU and its Member States.
5. The Council approved the draft Ministerial Declaration on a post-Bali work programme, and in particular its overall objective of concluding the Round. The Council reconfirmed the importance of achieving a comprehensive, ambitious and balanced final outcome within and across all of the areas of the DDA, in conformity with the relevant Council conclusions. In this context, the Council emphasised the need to further explore the ground for liberalisation of trade in environmental goods and services."