

URGENT APPEAL TO TRADE MINISTERS

We, members of the Evian Group Open World Initiative (OWI), a network and movement of individuals from multiple professional activities, diverse continents and cultures, primarily from the generation that will be assuming positions of responsibility and leadership in the decade or so ahead, committed to an open world economy, sustainable growth and social development, wish to express our alarm that the Doha 'Development' Agenda should be making so little progress.

The world is facing a number of major challenges that would normally be too obvious to mention. We feel, however, the need to remind trade negotiators: that there are powerful new players in the trade arena, which must be well integrated into the global multilateral rules-based economic community; that there are hundreds of millions of young people joining the labour market, overwhelmingly in developing countries, for whom not only jobs need to be found, but a sense of inclusion and hope needs even more to be conveyed; that there are major challenges in regard to poverty, the environment, disease, resources; that there is terrorism world-wide. This is a time for leadership, vision, and adherence to robust economic and social principles, to the rule of law and to firm commitment to discharging international obligations (eg the Doha Declaration), both in letter and in spirit.

Of course trade and a successful Doha Round cannot solve all problems. That we know. But we also know that a failure to move the Doha Agenda forward will exacerbate them, and will further weaken the fabric of the all too fragile global economy and accelerate the centrifugal forces in the global community that have intensified in recent years.

Conversely, progress in trade, a truly successful WTO ministerial meeting in Hong Kong and the political leadership and vision driving these will have a highly salutary effect. This is a time of great danger; it is also a time of great opportunity. The former must be avoided, the latter must be seized. It is a matter of vision, will and, above all else, action..

A major breakthrough must be obtained preferably by the end of July, if not soonest thereafter. To that end the mercantilist spirit and reciprocity based brinkmanship that have characterised negotiations to date must be eradicated, or at least very strongly diluted. We urge you instead to think of the future, of the kind of world you will be bequeathing, of your responsibility to the next generation, and to all future generations. All countries stand to benefit from a more dynamic and open world economy. Trade ministers of developing countries should pursue the positive impact socially responsible trade liberalisation can have on domestic reform and national institutional development.

Both history and theory demonstrate that the greatest benefits tend to come from unilateral trade-liberalisation. We believe all WTO members share responsibility, but some share it more than others. In particular, we call on the EU, the US, Japan, Switzerland, Norway and Canada to take the lead in *unilaterally undertaking substantial agricultural trade liberalisation*, not only in respect to foreign and domestic subsidies, but also on market access. This would be a sign of true leadership that the world is currently desperately lacking, it will also have a galvanising effect on the global economy and on the spirit needed to create a global community for the XXI century that will prevent it from going down the disastrous road of protectionism and nationalism that caused such catastrophe and tragedy in the previous century.

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