

At the informal TNC meeting, after consultations led by Chairs in the respective negotiations groups and my own consultations, we devised a comprehensive and structured work programme for the next three months, which included participation of senior officials each month (19 to 23 October; 23 to 27 November; and 14 to 16 December).

On that occasion many of you stressed that, as good as the work programme may be, it would not be sufficient to lead to results without the political engagement and hard bargaining that needs to take place among the members. That engagement was needed at all levels, multilaterally, plurilaterally and bilaterally.

My message to G20 leaders in Pittsburgh was that delegations in Geneva had done what had been asked of them — the road had been mapped out, but still needed to be walked. In my intervention, I pointed out to leaders that there was a gap between what they said and where they were on the questions of containing protectionism and concluding the Round. I urged them to seriously address this “gap” problem and give negotiators clear instructions that concluding the Round remained a priority for them, if 2010 was to be doable, which I think it is.

The Statement of the Leaders of the G20 re-affirmed their commitment to seeking a conclusion to the DDA in 2010, consistent with the mandate and based on the progress already achieved, including with regard to modalities. They endorsed the work programme we developed and instructed ministers to take stock of the situation no later than early next year, taking into account the results we would have achieved by then. Leaders pledged to remain engaged and review progress in the negotiations during their next meeting.

Allow me also briefly to update you on my recent contacts with ministers responsible for finance and development during the recent IMF-World Bank annual meeting in Istanbul and report to you on the LDCs' [least-developed countries] trade ministers meeting in Dar-es-Salaam from which I recently returned.

In Istanbul I stressed that international trade would be key to recovery; that a successful conclusion of the Doha Round can yield a double dividend: on the one hand, it can play the role of a global stimulus package. On the other hand, it can effectively act as a structural reform package. It is the most effective way of further constraining protectionist pressures and contributing to growth. I also stressed the importance of keeping an eye on trade finance and the need to recapitalize regional development banks, given their role in helping the poorest and weakest countries weather the crisis.

The message coming from the LDCs' Ministerial Meeting in Dar-es-Salaam is one of urgency in concluding the Round and delivering on the development promises it contains, many of which are of specific interest to the poorest countries.

At the recent conference organized by the Coalition of Services Industries in Washington I also had the opportunity to meet with a number of ministers who signalled serious engagement reflecting their leaders' commitments at the G20.

Next week I will be travelling to the African Trade Ministers meeting in Cairo. I am convinced that this will be another important opportunity to discuss the importance of keeping trade open and concluding the Doha Round to Africa.

We are now one month into the work programme we devised collectively to be able to reach a successful conclusion by 2010. I think it would be fair to say that we have seen some progress in areas such as trade facilitation, where members came well-prepared and worked hard on draft textual proposals. I also think that we have seen serious engagement by members on templates and scheduling in agriculture as well as NAMA [non-agricultural market access].

A number of members have also engaged in some bilateral consultations.

But I also believe that it will be difficult to get to 2010 without a serious acceleration of the pace. We need to see real negotiations emerge, not only informal consultations and discussions, but real exchanges among members. We need to do so in a manner which is inclusive and leaves no interest behind. We need to ensure greater transparency over bilateral discussions so that every member feels it is part of an overall process.

A number of senior officials are in Geneva this week and I think this is an important factor in joining up the dots of the negotiation and ensuring that capitals remain directly engaged in the process. But whether through senior officials or through Geneva negotiators, the key now is to walk the talk.

Let me mention in addition to chairs' consultations and small group meetings taking place this week, I will also hold consultations on the key issues of agriculture, NAMA and services together with the respective chairs, in variable geometry, with a view to providing members with avenues for engagement. I will also be meeting with a number of senior officials and delegations which are in town this week. I intend to hold a Green Room meeting on Thursday afternoon and a full transparency session on Friday morning in the form of an Informal TNC to ensure transparency and inclusiveness.

When this week is over, I hope we will have a better sense of the work ahead of us in November, so that the next week of negotiations benefiting from the presence of senior officials in Geneva in November can register a qualitative change in the negotiating dynamics and progress on substance.

Let me say a few words on the issue of monitoring of trade and trade-related measures adopted by members in the context of the crisis. As you know, we have been regularly providing you with updates on this matter, the last one in July 2009 and a G20 specific one in September 2009. We are currently in the process of preparing the next report to the TPRB [Trade Policy Review Body] with the Annual Overview of Developments in the Trading System called for in the TPR mandate. I intend to finalize this annual report in time for circulation ahead of the Ministerial Conference, for which I believe it will be a useful background document.

Let me also provide you with a brief update on my consultations on the issues of GI [geographical indications] extension and the relationship between the TRIPS [Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights] Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity [CBD], which I hold under the mandate given to me at the Hong Kong Ministerial.

As foreshadowed at the July GC [General Council] meeting, I held another round of consultations on 8 October with the same group of delegations, but with a slight adaptation to the methodology. I invited delegations to submit suggested draft questions on the two topics, that is on both TRIPS/CBD and GI extension, which could help guide the discussions. We received questions on both topics from all perspectives in the debate. The questions have been ordered in clusters of issues. The 8 October meeting addressed the first two clusters of each topic. In particular on TRIPS-CBD, the discussion centred around the legal character of misappropriation and the measures, other than the disclosure requirement, to address misappropriation and benefit sharing. On GI extension, the discussion centred on the differences between protection under Article 22 and Article 23 as well as on the effects on higher protection to additional products. The discussion was highly technical and detailed. However, differences still remain on the substance. Hence the main observations in my report to the General Council of 28 July remain valid, as does the longer description of the state of play that I made during the open-ended briefing on 27 July.

We are working on the schedule for the next round of consultations which I will expect will move through the remaining clusters of the questions that delegations have submitted.

Finally, I would like to briefly look ahead to the next 41 days before the opening session of the WTO's 7th Ministerial Conference. I know that the General Council Chairman will provide you with a comprehensive overview of his recent consultations on various aspects of the conference and I would like to thank him for his untiring efforts towards ensuring that we have a constructive, efficient and transparent meeting.

This Ministerial Conference will be a different sort of gathering of ministers compared to large-scale and week-long events that have taken place since 1998. For a start, this ministerial meeting, as we established a long time ago, is on a separate track from the on-going Doha Round negotiations. In other words, this meeting is not a DDA negotiating meeting. It is our hope that ministers will come to Geneva to address and interact on a few key themes, regarding the WTO and the multilateral trading system, the "big picture" so to say. It is time that ministers are given the opportunity to engage in a more wide-ranging systemic debate and to provide the WTO with guidance for the next few years.

However, and there seems to be some confusion on this point, this does not mean that ministers' statements or indeed their discussions cannot address the issue of the Doha Round or indeed specific negotiations. On the contrary, it would seem rather odd if the elephant in the room remained nameless. This is why discussion of the Doha Round is specifically foreseen in themes for the Working Sessions. And in this specific context I think that the 7th Ministerial Conference represents an important platform for ministers to send a strong signal of commitment to concluding the Doha Development Round.

With 41 days and the clock ticking, I think it is high time we rolled up our sleeves and get down to business.