

PRESS RELEASE

WTO negotiations: EUROCHAMBRES warns against the end of the multilateral trade system

EUROCHAMBRES is seriously concerned for the future of the WTO Doha round. After the April deadline set for agreement on modalities and figures has been missed, the credibility of WTO members' commitment to further trade liberalisation is invariably weakened.

EUROCHAMBRES calls on WTO members to overcome entrenched positions and to re-launch negotiations rapidly and with a constructive attitude in order to make a successful conclusion of the Doha Round feasible in 2006.

Pierre Simon, President of EUROCHAMBRES, said: *"We have witnessed with concern that progress in NAMA, services, and trade facilitation falls behind schedule due to the link to the agriculture negotiations. To avoid an impasse, the WTO agenda should be re-balanced away from the one-sided focus on agriculture, and focus more on a reduction of barriers to trade. The business community worldwide would benefit from it."*

Christoph Leidl, Chairman of the Global Chamber Platform – which links Chambers of Commerce and Industry around the world – added: *"As negotiators fail to make progress, it is crucial for the global business community to stand united. We are working with our partner Chambers around the world to overcome the current deadlock."*

A liberalisation of world trade within the framework of a stable, transparent and internationally accepted system of rules is in the interest of both developing and developed countries. This would contribute towards fostering job creation, enhancing economic growth and development, increasing consumers' choice and developing international law and settlement of trade disputes.

After the failure in Cancún and the extremely poor results in Hong Kong, this deadlock is a threat for the survival of the multilateral trading system and may encourage key negotiating parties to turn to bilateral or regional free trade agreements. This would have very negative repercussions on development and economic growth worldwide.

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