

PRESS RELEASE

WTO Hong Kong Ministerial: EUROCHAMBRES concerned about sluggish and unambitious Doha negotiations

Ahead of the Hong Kong WTO Ministerial on 13-18 December, EUROCHAMBRES expressed its concern about the slow progress and the lowering of ambitions in the Doha Round negotiations. In a position paper issued yesterday, EUROCHAMBRES urged WTO Members to use the Hong Kong meeting to finally overcome entrenched positions and to pave the way for a successful conclusion of the Doha Round in 2006.

EUROCHAMBRES' President Christoph Leitl said: *"Lowering ambitions in the Doha Round is detrimental to the competitiveness of businesses, not only in Europe but worldwide. In order to prosper in a global economy, companies need real improvements in market access for goods and services as well as in the protection of intellectual property rights. In Hong Kong, WTO Members have a responsibility to take an important step into the right direction and to strengthen the multilateral trading system. We also expect emerging economies to contribute to a successful conclusion of negotiation modalities according to their individual capabilities."*

Mr Leitl added: *"The WTO agenda needs to be re-balanced away from agriculture. Economies worldwide stand to gain much more from increased trade in goods and services. This needs to be the focus of the negotiations."*

In particular, EUROCHAMBRES highlighted that substantial progress needs to be made in the following pivotal areas:

- **Tariffs and non-tariff barriers (NTBs):** Chambers support an ambitious, non-linear approach to cut tariffs and harmonise tariff structures. The percentage of tariff bindings needs to be extended and NTBs reduced.
- **Trade Facilitation:** Chambers welcome the progress made in trade facilitation as the most successful area in the Doha negotiations so far. WTO Members should arrive at an agreement to make customs procedures simpler and more transparent.
- **Services:** Chambers regret the lack of ambition in the offers on the negotiation table so far, and urge WTO Members to improve market access in a wide range of sectors and in all modes of supply. Chambers welcome recent proposals to enhance the transparency of the GATS agreement.
- **Intellectual Property Rights:** Chambers remind WTO Members of the importance to ensure worldwide implementation of Intellectual Property Rights.

EUROCHAMBRES has member organisations in 44 countries representing a network of 2,000 regional and local Chambers with over 18 million member companies.

Chambers offer their expertise and their well-established networks for capacity building and technical assistance in developing and least-developed countries.

EUROCHAMBRES will monitor the progress of the negotiations. It will continue to provide European business views and contributions to help the Doha Round succeed in strengthening the multilateral trade system and promoting growth and development.

EUROCHAMBRES' Position Paper can be downloaded from www.eurochambres.be

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