

Article

THE INTERNATIONAL TRADING SYSTEM POST-BALI: THE NEED FOR A NEW PARADIGM*

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ABSTRACT

The Doha Ministerial Conference in 2001 launched the Doha Round with an ambitious Doha Development Agenda (hereinafter “DDA”) that focusses on the core market access issues of agriculture, non-agricultural market access (hereinafter “NAMA”) and services. Today, after more than a decade of negotiations, conclusion of the DDA is nowhere in sight. The negotiations were in fact suspended in 2006, but resumed in 2007. The Bali Ministerial Conference in December 2013 achieved some measure of success under the new Director-General Roberto Azevedo. In particular, since the DDA launch, Ministers have now agreed on a final Trade Facilitation

* Postscript: Recent developments in the negotiating process in Geneva have revealed that certain developing countries are holding up negotiations on the Protocol of Amendment relating to the Trade Facilitation Agreement. It would appear that these countries are back-tracking from the Ministerial decision to implement the Bali Package, in particular on Trade Facilitation. WTO members need to find a way out of this impasse. Hence it is all the more important to find a new paradigm, as suggested in this paper, in order to move negotiations post-Bali. The Trade Facilitation Agreement and the post-Bali Package should not be held hostage in the name of food security.

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Agreement without being held hostage to a Single Undertaking. This paper focusses on what it would take to reinvigorate the WTO and DDA negotiations. It argues for new approaches to enable the DDA to shift gears and break the current log-jam, by evolving into new plurilateral mechanisms in order to move the multilateral trade liberalisation process forward. It concludes that beyond the DDA, the WTO has to stay relevant to economic and technological realities. It must take account of the changing patterns of global trade: surging globalisation, globally integrated production chains, and the rise of East and South Asia.

KEYWORDS: *international trade, WTO, Bali WTO Ministerial Meeting, Doha Development Agenda, Preferential Trade Agreements, Global Value Chains, Plurilateral Approaches*