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www.skirec.org Email Id: skirec.org@gmail.com

STUDY OF RELATIONS BETWEEN GLOBAL NEGOTIATIONS AND INDIAN AGRICULTURE

Jitender Kumar Bhardwaj
Government College Bahu, Jhajjar

Abstracts

Global politics is quite simply politics on a global/international scale. It refers to relations between nation states (countries) or issues relating to all or most of them, such as environmental regulation to tackle global warming which requires international cooperation or other major issues that require the attention of all world powers. There has been a growth of international organizations, some of which, like the United Nations having a universal membership. A growing number of political issues particularly environment have also acquired a 'global' character as they affect all parts of the world and so all people on the planet. It also applies to the economy, where it is commonplace to refer to the 'global economy' or 'global capitalism', in that fewer and fewer countries now remain outside the international trading system and are unaffected by external investment and the integration of financial markets. In other words, state borders have become increasingly 'porous', and, as a result, the conventional domestic/international, or 'inside/outside', divide is increasingly difficult to sustain. This trend has been particularly associated with globalization. The second development, linked to the first, is that relations among states have come to be characterized by growing interdependence and interconnectedness. Tasks such as promoting economic growth and prosperity, tackling global warming, halting the spread of weapons of mass destruction and coping with pandemic diseases are impossible for any state to accomplish on its own, however powerful it might be. States, in these circumstances, are forced to work together, relying on collective efforts and energies. For such a web of relationships has created a condition of 'complex interdependence', in which states are drawn into cooperation and integration by forces such as closer trading and other economic relationships.

Keywords: Study of relations between Global Negotiations and Indian Agriculture

The World Trade Organization is an international organization which was created for the liberalization of international trade. WTO is responsible for implementing new trade agreements. All the member countries of WTO have to follow the trade agreement as decided by the WTO. India is one of the founding members of WTO along with 134 other countries. India's participation in an increasingly rule based system in governance of International trade, would ultimately lead to better prosperity for the nation. Various trade disputes of India with other nations have been settled through WTO. India has also played an important part in the effective formulation of major trade policies. By being amember of WTO several countries are now trading with India, thus giving a boost to production, employment, standard of living and an opportunity to maximize the use of the world resources. WTO helps promote peace and prosperity across the globe; Disputes are settled amicably; Rules bring about greater discipline in trade negotiations, thereby reducing inequalities to a large extent ; Free trade reduces the cost of living and increases household income; Companies have greater access to markets and consumers have wider range of products to choose from and good governance accelerates economic growth

Article IX.1 of the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the WTO says: “The WTO shall continue the practice of decision-making by consensus followed under GATT 1947. Except as otherwise provided, where a decision cannot be arrived at by consensus, the matter at issue shall be decided by voting.”Decision-making at the WTO is carried out using the rule of ‘consensus’. While voting is endorsed, this rarely took place in the life of the GATT, and has never happened at the WTO. In theory, consensus means that a single member, no matter who, is able to object to, and hold up a decision on any issue. This theoretical understanding is also used by the Secretariat and the influential countries as evidence of the WTO’s democratic nature.

In practice, consensus is assumed when there is no formal objection to a decision by any Member present at the meeting. It does not mean active agreement, merely the absence of objection. Silence is therefore taken to mean consent. Consensus decision-making can be democratic if and only if countries are free to voice their dissent. In practice, the power politics at play in the WTO means that dissent by any one country in a formal meeting, and the consequent blocking of consensus, is rare.

In the process of manufacturing consensus, Decision-making essentially takes place in 'concentric circles'. First, the US and the EU come together to decide on a common position. The circle is then expanded to Japan and Canada. They make up the 'Quad'. After this, the circle is enlarged to include other developed countries, followed by friendly developing countries (e.g. South Africa, Chile, Singapore etc). This group is sometimes known as 'Friends of the Chair'. And finally, other influential developing countries, such as India and Malaysia are brought on board, since they carry weight, and it would be impossible for the 'majors' to leave them out. China, a new member, also falls into this category. The majority of developing countries never make it into this circle of decision-making.

As WTO follows a decision-making structure that is based on consensus and an informal decision-making process. Former WTO Director General Mike Moore always presented the WTO as democratic, rules-based and member-driven. At a conference on democracy and free trade, he stated: "The WTO system is built upon the rule of law and respect for the sovereign equality of nations. Ultimately, it is an open, rules-based multilateral trading system, built on democratic values. It is the most democratic international body in existence today...The transparency and inclusiveness - which is to say the 'legitimacy' of the process helps to explain why Member governments are more prepared and more willing to reach agreement when they gathered in Doha..." But opponents of the World Trade Organisation, who sometimes claim that the system is 'undemocratic', start from a basic fallacy. The WTO is not imposed on countries... No country is forced to sign our agreements. Each and every one of the WTO's rules is negotiated by member governments and agreed by consensus.[3] The informality of the process means that, in fact, it is a process of consultation and discussion behind closed doors. Formally, one can vote, but a member will be ignored unless you are a major trading country. This means that those with clout will carry the most weight. There are few countries that would challenge a decision that has been put forward as a done deal. But decisions of the WTO have an impact on all members and this is why the rules- based multilateral trading system requires that the entire membership is given an opportunity to effectively participate.

In December 1999 in Seattle, when member governments at the ministerial revolted. The ugly secrets of how the institution actually functions became public, much to the embarrassment of the majors. The African Group, totally exasperated by their marginalisation in discussions, issued a statement threatening that they would not be part of any package they had not been involved in discussing. This was followed by a similar joint communique from the Latin American and the Caribbean countries.

An urgent need was felt for the internal transparency and inclusion to accommodate a larger and more diverse membership and to meet the needs and aspirations of all of its members.[6] The 2000 Chair of the General Council, Ambassador Kare Bryn of Norway reduced the numbers of green room consultations in favour of small group meetings with different members, followed by 'informals' open to all. Ambassador Bryn's efforts were widely viewed by developing countries as genuine attempts at greater democracy. In April 2000, Ambassador Bryn presented a discussion paper, raising fundamental questions about the democracy of WTO decision-making processes and proposing checks on the abuse of power by influential members.[7] Chairman's statement suggested that 1) That Members are advised of the intention to hold informal consultations; 2) That those Members with an interest in the specific issue under consideration are given the opportunity to make their views known; 3) That no assumption should be made that one Member represents any other members, except where the members concerned have agreed on such an arrangement; 4) That the outcome of such consultations is reported back to the full Membership expeditiously for consideration. But all these prprosals proved to be mere guidelines, the hopes of a set of binding rules had faded.

In the initial phase of preparation for Doha, some delegates in Geneva felt that, the process was becoming somewhat more inclusive. This does not mean that there was total transparency or that negotiators of the politically weaker countries always knew what negotiations were going on. But delegates of the small economies would be invited to some consultations, when before they were totally excluded. However, the moment the powerful countries felt the pressure, the same secretive, non-democratic and exclusive negotiating practices re-emerged. This was clear from the two Mini-Ministerials held before the Doha ministerial, in Mexico in August 2001, and in Singapore in October 2001. Only about 20-22 countries were invited to each meeting. There was a small change from previous 'green room' practice. The LDC co-ordinator, Tanzania, and the African Group Coordinator, Nigeria, were present at both Mini-Ministerials. The problem was that no country had surrendered negotiating rights to these representatives, although it was assumed by the influential countries that such representation was sufficiently inclusive.

Some delegates in Geneva tried to get invitations, but the WTO Secretariat claimed no responsibility for those meetings, and the host countries said that they were merely providing facilities, and were not in a position to issue invitations. The 'majors' realized they could not beat the Geneva process. Developing countries had built capacity in the Geneva process. Realising that they could not put their agenda though Geneva, they started to have meetings amongst a small group of Members. The first was in Frankfurt. Those who were invited included the Quad (US, EU, Japan and Canada), and other countries sympathetic to the new round, such as South Africa, Egypt and Singapore. Malaysia and a few others who had opposing views were also invited. They did notsucceed in Frankfurt. Many countries sent their Geneva based Ambassadors. Then they met in Coppet (Switzerland). Again, many Ambassadors (from Geneva) were sent.

The real meeting that changed things was the one that was held in Mexico (at the end of August). After Mexico, people started to see things differently. It was again a selected group. The follow-up to that meeting was in Singapore. After the Singapore meeting, the DG said that it was not a WTO meeting. However, both the Chair of general council and the DG were present. They also asked the Singapore ambassador to give a brief to the entire membership. And reading in the press, what transpired in Singapore is very close to what was in fact agreed in Doha. This method lacks transparency and is a relic of the GATT, where countries that were strong trading nations, came together and tried to push their agenda on to other.

The main issues in the run-up to Doha was the attempt by developed countries to expand the scope of the WTO to include the so-called Singapore issues (investment, competition, transparency in government procurement and trade facilitation). The majority of developing countries, overburdened by their commitments from earlier rounds, were not in favour of these issues. The process leading to Seattle was cumbersome. We never reached an agreement. What it did was to push the formulation of the text till the end. This usually happens in Ministerials. There were many problems for developing countries in the development of the Draft Declaration for Doha. One was the way the Draft ignored suggestions from developing countries. Many delegates blamed that in consultation process where there was the appearance of participation, but no substance.

There were intensive plurilateral consultations before Doha. In these consultations, The first draft, which came, reflected two positions. The revised second draft did not reflect the position of the majority. Majority of Members did not agree to negotiations on Singapore issues and environment. And even areas where they had strong positions were not appropriately reflected. A difference in some developing countries' positions started to emerge as Doha approached. This was all part of the learning process after Seattle. Developed countries were responsible for a frenzy of activity going on - bilaterals, regional meetings, and contact with key leaders. There was greater involvement of some Capitals and key Ministers in the process. All this had quite a bit to do with why positions changed. When Doha came closer, negotiations were more concentrated at Capital level.

US wanted to divide the developing countries by giving a moratorium to sub-Saharan Africa on the implementation of TRIPS.) Just before Doha, ministers from the African countries that are part of AGOA (the African Growth Opportunity Act) went to Washington. When they came back, some countries' views on the issue of the TRIPS agreement and public health had taken a shift towards the US position.

Chairman of the General Council Stuart Harbinson released two drafts for Doha. The first had two options in brackets on the new issues, showing that there was disagreement. Even though Members continued to express the same position of 'no new issues', the second draft on 27 October 2001 was a clean text. That is, the option of no negotiations on new issues was removed. The text agreed to the commencement of negotiations by the 5th Ministerial. It did not meet the concerns of developing countries. Nigeria issued a statement denouncing the second Draft Declaration.

In Doha, the spin-doctors had realised that in Seattle, Ministers felt ignored, and developing countries were prepared to bite the bullet. In Doha, they created a process, where Ministers could go to the Committee of the Whole (COW) and discuss and raise issues, but nobody was taking into account what they said. They were just venting their frustration. That feeling of being part of the process dented their anger of being uninvolved. But in fact, there was a smaller group taking the decisions for the whole. Those managing Doha kept Ministers in a semblance of being involved in the process, when they were not, because what was discussed in the Committee of the Whole was not reflected in the Declaration. The views, which were captured in the Declaration, came from people who were pushing on environment and 'new issues'. The Ministers felt part and parcel of the process, but were not involved in real terms.

There were also problems around the issue of representation. While the big economies were allowed to represent themselves, for the smaller economies, at the most critical moments, only the representatives of the groups were included. Yet the African, LDC and ACP countries had not relinquished their negotiating rights to their group representatives, nor were they consulted on this issue. One cannot really complain that you were not represented. The problem is that those particular representatives came under a considerable amount of pressure. The impartiality of the Secretariat was again in question.

In Ministerial meeting held on 13th November, there were only 23 countries present in the critical 'green room', where the final deal was sealed. They were: Australia, Brazil, Botswana, Canada, Chile, Egypt, the EU (Pascal Lamy), Guatemala, India, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Singapore, South Africa, Switzerland, Tanzania, Uruguay, USA, Zimbabwe, Chair of the General Council (Hong Kong), and the DG.[13] The 'green room' of the 13th produced an outcome that was clearly different from the original positions of the Africans and LDC countries, causing a lot of confusion and anger amongst many. An ACP/LDC/African Group meeting took place on the 14th, when the text from the 'green room' was presented.

India and a few countries wanted to speak on the question of modalities (of the 'new issues'). They arranged speakers, and speakers were given the floor literally to set the consensus. Although India had raised its flag first, 6-7 speakers who were in favour of consensus were given the floor one after another. And when a country had spoken, somebody would clap. A number of countries had intended to speak up against the status quo (on 'new issues'), but eventually when they saw how the groundswell was organized, they either backed off, or toned down. In that environment, it would be seen as though you were a wrecker. That is common, anyway, to arrange a certain viewpoint to appear that it is the dominant viewpoint... So they orchestrated this speaking order and put India under great pressure to compromise.

Many developing countries that were opposed to a new round were extremely disappointed by Malaysia's silence in Doha. Malaysian officials up until August had been one of the most articulate countries speaking up against new issues. Yet, by October, it was reported in the international press that Minister Rafidah supported an opt-in opt-out investment agreement (the EU's attempt to get a full investment agreement in through the back door). One source who was present in the 'green room' said that Minister Rafida was very much on the side of developed countries and 'implored the Africans to go along with the deal.' Due in large part to Pakistan and Malaysia's reticence post-September 11, the Like Minded Group (LMG) arrived in Doha in a much weaker position. While some members, such as India, Zimbabwe, Cuba, Jamaica, Dominican Republic were still opposing a new round, the LMG was not able to hold a united position in this area. The other country that played a significant role in the outcome of Doha was Nigeria, representative of the African Group in Doha. Their position pre-Doha, and even during Doha, underwent a 180-degree shift on the final dayof the ministerial. India's commerce minister Murasoli Maran fought a brave fight to the end. Unfortunately, the accusation of supporting terrorism if they continued opposing the new round may have contributed to India's decision finally to back down when they found in the last 'green room' that they were indeed alone in that group. They would also have had to bear the brunt of the political / trade costs had they held up the talks, very likely in the form of trade sanctions by the majors. This was perceived to be too costly domestically.

The anti-democratic decision-making processes of the WTO result in highly imbalanced trade rules which are damaging the economies of the developing world. Beneath all the gestures to bring in developing countries from the cold, the real agenda is at the fore - to provide corporations of the developed countries access to markets of the developing world by dismantling not only tariff structures but also domestic regulations that impede foreign corporations. In terms of the substantive issues, the Doha Development Agenda emerging out of the Fourth Ministerial Conference was a skillful public relations exercise, which unfortunately is a major step in the wrong direction for developing countries. This failure to address the needs and interests of the developing world is clear a year after Doha. The promises made to the South have remained undelivered as deadlines on issues of importance to the South have all passed.

The TRIPS and Public Health Declaration was the ‘trophy’ developing countries brought back from Doha. It is a political declaration stating that ‘The TRIPS Agreement does not and should not prevent members from taking measures to protect public health’, hence allowing countries to take action to provide affordable generic drugs. Unfortunately in the year since Doha, the Declaration has been severely watered down by the US, EU and Japan1. These countries, led by the US, are adamant about limiting the scope of diseases covered by the Declaration. The deadline of end 2002 to find a solution for developing countries without manufacturing capacity to be able to access affordable drugs has also been missed.

The Doha Round of WTO negotiations—formally, the Doha Development Agenda— was launched in November 2001. The work program covered about 20 areas of trade, including agriculture, services trade, market access for nonagricultural products, and certain intellectual property issues. Despite initial optimism, the negotiations stalled early in the process as tension and disagreements between major trading countries in the developed and developing world impeded progress. The promise in Doha thatdeveloping countries’ priority issues - implementation and Special and Differential Treatment - would be dealt with on a fast track with decisions taken by July and December 2002 were also not materialized. Developed countries have remained completely intransigent in the negotiations. It is clear that there is no political will to right the imbalances of the Uruguay Round, or to address the development needs of the majority.

Even as the promises made to developing countries remain unfulfilled, developed countries are aggressively pursuing their own interests. In agriculture, intensive talks are underway to knock together a new agreement. Developing countries are called to undertake yet another round of aggressive tariff reduction, yet the US adopted their Farm Bill in May 2002, increasing subsidies by 63 per cent As a result of enlargement, EU subsidies will increase up to 2006 and subsidy levels will be maintained at the 2006 level until 2013. It is inevitable that dumping in developing countries will escalate yet, in spite of this, the South is being told it must continue to liberalise .

Doha also fast-tracked the negotiations in services. The request phase started in June 2002 despite the fact that the mandated assessment (Article XIX.3 of the GATS) of the Uruguay Round services liberalisation has not been carried out. The offer phase takes place from March 2003. Many developing countries are at a loss at dealing with the current GATS negotiations. The liberalisation requests they have received from the developed countries have covered all sectors imaginable, yet their small service suppliers are in no position to compete with the Northern corporations. They are extremely nervous that they will be pressured into opening up their domestic service markets in the current GATS round.

On the question of the new issues - investment, competition, transparency in government procurement and trade facilitation - the EU has chosen to ignore the Chairman’s statement that the launch of these issues depends upon a decision based on explicit consensus at the 5th Ministerial.3 In discussions in Geneva, the EU has called for a broad definition of foreign direct investment, and the US is insisting on the inclusion of portfolio investment. The launch of the new issues will essentially be about removing domestic regulations that protect domestic enterprises, hence eliminating the last bastion of policy space developing country governments have at their disposal to support their local industries and enterprises. Cancun will be a critical decisive moment in history. If the round — with all the new issues - is launched, it will have devastating impact on ordinary people all over the world. Refusal by developing countries to launch the new issues, on the other hand, will bring the WTO to a standstill and hopefully the beginning of a significant roll-back. The outcome rests on whether developing countries will be able to resist the political and economic pressures of the rich countries. Developing country governments so far have failed their people by agreeing to be swindled time and time again. It should be clear to all that attempts to 'developmentalise' the WTO, as with attempts to 'democratise' it, are nothing more than a public relations exercise carried out by the powerful to couch their corporate interests.[15]

WTO members continue to conduct negotiations to reform agricultural trade. These talks began in early 2000 under the original mandate of the Agriculture Agreement and became part of the Doha Round at the 2001 Doha Ministerial Conference. At the 2013 Bali Ministerial Conference, ministers adopted important decisions on agriculture. More recently, at the 2015 Nairobi Ministerial Conference, WTO members agreed on a historic decision to eliminate agricultural export subsidies, the most important reform of international trade rules in agriculture since the WTO was established. The negotiations take place in special sessions of the Agriculture Committee.

Article 20 of the WTO Agriculture Agreement recognizes that the long-term objective of substantial progressive reductions in support and protection in agriculture is an ongoing process. It says agriculture negotiations should restart in 2000.In November 2001, the agriculture talks became part of the "single undertaking" in the Doha Round of trade negotiations. In 2004, WTO members meeting as the General Council agreed on a set of decisions, sometimes called the July 2004 package. The main section on agriculture contains a framework which outlines what could be a final deal. Members were able to narrow their difference at the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference in December 2005.

A draft agriculture text was circulated in 2006. This and later revisions contain proposed formulas for cutting tariffs and subsidies, along with various new provisions that would be included in the future agreement on agriculture. Much of 2007 and 2008 saw intensive negotiations, and numerous working papers were developed. In July 2008, a group of ministers went to Geneva to try to negotiate a breakthrough on key issues. The consultations continued from September. Drawing on over a year of negotiations, on 6 December 2008 the chair of the agriculture negotiations issued a fourth revision of the draft (often called "Rev.4") to capture the progress and highlight the remaining gaps.

From 2011 the talks resumed on trying to narrow the differences in members' position. At the Ministerial Conference at the end of the year, ministers agreed that for the time being members should concentrate on topics where progress was most likely to be made. Both the 2013 Bali Ministerial Conference and 2015 Nairobi Ministerial Conference resulted in significant outcomes in agriculture

At the 2013 Ministerial Conference in Bali, Indonesia, ministers agreed on a package of issues, including four decisions on agriculture:

- an agreement to negotiate a permanent solution to public stockholding for food security purposes, and to refrain from challenging breaches of domestic support commitments resulting from developing countries' public stockholding programmes for food security provided certain conditions are met
- a call for more transparency in tariff (or tariff-rate) quota administration – whereby quantities inside a quota are charged lower import duty rates - and for governments not to create trade barriers by how they distribute quotas among importers
- an expansion of the list of "General Services" - to include spending on land use, land reform, water management, and other poverty-reduction programmes -that qualify for Green Box support (i.e. domestic support that is allowed without limits because it does not distort trade, or at most causes minimal distortion).
- a declaration to reduce all forms of export subsidies and to enhance transparency and monitoring

In Bali, ministers also agreed to enhance transparency and monitoring in the trading of cotton in recognition of the importance of this sector to developing countries and to work towards the reform of global trade in cotton.

At the 2015 WTO Nairobi Ministerial Conference, WTO members adopted a historic decision to eliminate agricultural export subsidies and to set disciplines on export measures with equivalent effect. Under this decision, export subsidies will be eliminated by developed countries immediately, except for a handful of agriculture products, while developing countries have longer periods to do so. By eliminating export subsidies, WTO members delivered a key target of the Sustainable Development Goal on ZeroHunger. It will help to level the playing field for farmers around the world, particularly those in poor countries which cannot compete with rich countries that artificially boost their exports through subsidies.

WTO members agreed to engage constructively in finding a permanent solution to developing countries' use of public stockholding programmes for food security purposes. Ministers also agreed to continue negotiations on a special safeguard mechanism that would allow developing countries to temporarily raise tariffs on agriculture products in cases of import surges or price falls. The Nairobi Ministerial Decision on Cotton contains provisions on improving market access for least-developed countries, reforming domestic support and eliminating export subsidies. It also underlines the importance of effective assistance to support the cotton sector in developing countries. In Nairobi, ministers declared that “there remains a strong commitment of all members to advance negotiations on the remaining Doha issues. This includes advancing work in all three pillars of agriculture, namely domestic support, market access and export competition”.[16]

The stand being taken by the developed countries suggests that they are not willing to abide by what had been agreed to earlier in the Doha negotiations. In contrast, they are pressuring India to take onerous commitments that were not even contemplated during the negotiations. They also seem to be preparing grounds for shifting the blame on India for not yielding to these demands. Further, the developed countries have stalled negotiations on a permanent solution to the problem of public stockholding for food security.

This posed triple challenges for the government — securing India's interests in the multilateral trade negotiations; explaining its negotiating position to its key trade partners, and fighting the perception battle in the media. How the Department of Commerce and other key arms of the government grapple with these challenges will determine whether India will be wrongly blamed, yet again, for a lack of progress in the negotiations. As decided at the 2013 Bali Ministerial Conference of the WTO, the post-Bali work programme is required to build on the decisions taken at Bali on agriculture, development and least-developed countries' issues, as well as all other issues under the Doha mandate that are central to concluding the Doha Round. It is also expected to provide for a permanent solution to the problem of public stockholding for food securitypurposes, an issue that was partially resolved at Bali through the so-called peace clause.17The World Trade Organization's (WTO) most recent Ministerial Conference took place last December in Nairobi, Kenya. The United States and the European Union have emphasized that "new" issues and approaches should guide WTO negotiations in the future. But it is not clear what that means, and how it relates to the "old" issues and approaches. And with the rise of mega-regional trade negotiations, such as the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), there are serious questions about the WTO's role as a negotiating forum for trade liberalization. A number of topics were discussed in Nairobi, not all of which were directly related to the original Doha agenda. As briefly described below, some of the more noteworthy outcomes were on agriculture trade, trade facilitation, and information technology products. There are a variety of subissues here: export subsidies (including export credits), domestic support, stockpiling for food security, safeguard mechanisms, state trading entities, and cotton subsidies. One area of success on agriculture trade in Nairobi was export subsidies.[18] There is now a formal decision on phasing out these subsidies. However, its various carve-outs mean that its effectiveness might be somewhat less than suggested, and its full impact remains to be seen. And, while this result should be celebrated, it needs to be recognized that the line between export and domestic subsidies is not as clear as one might think. Subsidies can be structured and packaged in various ways, so that an export subsidy can be replaced by the same subsidy provided as a domestic subsidy (for example, by removing the export contingency). Depending on the new form it takes, the change in a particular subsidy's impact on trade might not be all that great. Importantly, and unfortunately, the Nairobi package does not rein in domestic agriculture subsidies generally. These subsidies remain high and are proliferating. This is not just a rich-world problem anymore; middle-income developing countries are now big providers as well.6 In this regard, India has made a big push to legitimize some of its subsidies under the guise of "food security." In Nairobi, this issue was not resolved, and will remain on the agenda.[19]

Beyond agriculture, the results from Nairobi were somewhat mixed. Some progress was made on trade facilitation, another element of the original Doha agenda. In Nairobi, additional countries ratified the new Trade Facilitation Agreement, although not enough yet for it to take effect. Two months before the Nairobi ministerial declaration, the WTOmarked its 50th member to sign onto the treaty. The figure rose to 63 by the time of the Nairobi Ministerial Conference. (Ratification by two-thirds of the membership is necessary in order for the pact to take effect; there are 162 members as of this writing.) Finally, another positive outcome from Nairobi was that the WTO announced during the conference that new trade liberalization had been achieved through a second Information Technology Agreement (ITA-II), an agreement among 53 WTO members to lower duties, on a most-favored-nation basis, on a wide range of technology products. This initiative was not technically part of Doha, but it shows that WTO negotiations can still promote trade liberalization.[20] Among the possible reforms that these various commissions and authors have proposed are changes in the institutional structure, management and resources of the WTO; greater transparency and closer consultation with legislatures and non-governmental actors; more accommodations to the needs of developing countries; and addressing the relationship between the WTO and regional trade arrangements. The latest of these initiatives began in 2012, when Director-General Pascal Lamy appointed a WTO Panel on Defining the Future of Trade. Reminiscent of a "Wise Men's Group" put together in the mid-1980s at a time of uncertain direction in the GATT system, the group was charged with examining and analysing challenges to global trade opening in the twenty-first century. The twelve panellists, who represented numerous regions and walks of life, were asked to look at the drivers of today and tomorrow's trade, to look at trade patterns and at what it means to open global trade.[21] The future of the multilateral trading system depends in part on the ability of negotiators and political leaders to demonstrate the value of trade liberalization to legislators and representatives of civil society. Despite the success achieved it will be more beneficial if all members are fully committed to trade liberalization keeping aside their own protectionism.

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