SUMMARY
The Institute's latest poll of experts on the prospects for the Doha Round is once again a mixture of good news and bad news. The good news is that the contest for who should be the next Director-General of the WTO looks like it will be settled without the major disruption we saw in 1999 and few see the Doha Round negatively impacted by the USA-EC aircraft subsidy dispute. The bad news is that experts are not very optimistic about the ability of negotiators to achieve the agreed target in all five key areas of the negotiations by the end-July deadline. Part of the problem undoubtedly resides in the services negotiations, where a very large majority of respondents see the negotiations in serious trouble. In agriculture, fixing a target date for eliminating export subsidies, dealing effectively with “sensitive products” and the agriculture-NAMA (non-agriculture market access) linkage all remain difficult issues in the negotiations.

In an interesting (and potentially worrying) development, a majority of respondents now believe that regional trade agreements and FTAs pose a significant threat to the WTO and Doha Round, compared to just 33 percent of respondents who held this view two years ago.

The poll was conducted in late April and early May 2005 and included more than 100 respondents comprised of negotiators, policy-makers and experts located in Geneva and key capital cities around the world. The Institute's next poll will be conducted in July.

RESULTS

Services Negotiations in Deep Trouble
This element of the Doha Round is clearly in big trouble. Seventy-seven percent of all respondents and 82% of capitals-based respondents doubt that there will be a critical mass of services offers on the table by the end of May. Only 6% of those surveyed were optimistic on this point.

July Target Difficult to Meet
Fifty-six percent of respondents think it will be hard to reach consensus on an overall package of approximations in all five key areas of the Doha Round by the end of July. It has to be admitted however, that this poll was conducted before the breakthrough on the agricultural AVEs issue on the fringes of the OECD. In late April, only 15 percent of those surveyed were confident that a consensus could be reached by the summer break in Geneva.

WTO DG Race
There’s some good news here. A large majority (77%) of respondents believe that the selection of the WTO’s next Director-General will be made in the agreed timeframe by the end of May. Clearly nobody is interested in repeating the divisive handling of the issue in 1999 when WTO Members were forced to split the term of the DG between Mike Moore and Supachai Panitchpakdi.
Evolving Views on the Threat Posed by RTAs
In this latest survey, 53 percent of respondents agreed with the proposition that FTAs and regional trade agreements are endangering the WTO and the Doha Round. Slightly more than two years ago, in our very first survey in this series, only 33 percent of those responding to the survey saw RTAs as a problem for the WTO.

Airbus-Boeing Dispute
Only 24 percent of respondents believe that the dispute between the USA and EC over subsidies to commercial aircraft production is likely to negatively impact on prospects for the Doha Round. 71% of those in capitals and 65% of Geneva respondents do not see a problem with potential spill over in the dispute.

Saudi Arabian Accession to the WTO
There is growing optimism that the Kingdom is closing in on accession to the WTO. 47 percent of capitals-based respondents see Saudi Arabia in the WTO by the time of the next Ministerial Conference compared to just 18 percent of capitals-based people who doubt that result. Geneva-based representatives are less sanguine, with some 40 percent doubting that Saudi Arabia will be in the WTO by the end of the year.

US Compliance in the Cotton Case
Geneva and capitals-based respondents are in full agreement on this dispute. 65 percent of all respondents doubt that the USA will be able to comply fully with the findings against it in the cotton subsidies case. Twenty-four percent think the USA will comply fully with the recommendations addressed to it in this dispute.

Agriculture Negotiations
Three questions in the survey were focussed on the critical agriculture negotiations this time:

(1) Elimination of Export Subsidies: Sixty-five percent of all respondents doubted that it would be possible to fix a date for elimination of all agricultural export subsidies within five years of the end of the Round (77 percent of capitals-based reps held this view). Eighteen percent of those surveyed and responding thought a five-year time frame would be possible.

(2) Sensitive Products a Big Problem: Seventy-one percent of all respondents and 82 percent of Geneva-based respondents think that the “loophole” represented by the “sensitive products” option in the agriculture negotiations will permit developed countries to continue to maintain high levels of protection on products of greatest export interest to developing countries.

(3) Agriculture-NAMA Market Access Linkage: Geneva reps and capitals-based officials disagree markedly on whether the linkage between the agriculture and NAMA negotiations is generalised or just a linkage between the market access pillar of the agriculture talks and the NAMA negotiations. 62 percent of Geneva reps believe the linkage is the narrower, limited one while 58 percent of capitals-based reps think the linkage is generalised.

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