SUMMARY

This is the final Institute poll to be conducted ahead of the convening of WTO's Fifth Ministerial Conference in Cancun, Mexico. The good news, this time around, is that expectations are clearly rising with respect to finally resolving the outstanding issues in the TRIPS and Public Health debate. The bad news is that things do not look so good for agriculture where few see consensus on modalities and where the recent meeting in Montreal (like this poll) showed real trouble ahead on market access. The outlook for agreement to investment negotiations seems to have soured significantly since April. In this atmosphere, it is hardly surprising that few participants expect to see agreement reached on geographic indications (an emotive issue linked to progress in other areas). The response to our question on special and differential treatment seems to indicate that some negotiators are questioning others' stated motives. With just about five weeks to go before Cancun, WTO negotiators clearly have their work cut out for them. Our next poll will sample post-Cancun opinions in the first week of October.

Part 1: WTO DDA Negotiations

Agriculture: Poll results don't give us much encouragement for Cancun on this centrally important issue. Overall, just 29 percent of respondents expect to leave Cancun with agreement on agricultural negotiating modalities and of these “optimists”, many commented that modalities agreed would not be the comprehensive result envisaged in the “Harbinson text”. Geneva-based respondents are far more negative than officials in capitals, with 60 percent of those in Geneva believing a good outcome unlikely, compared to 33 percent in capitals. In the overall numbers, 26 percent of respondents gave a positive outcome in Cancun a 50-50 chance. On the second agriculture question posed, 81 percent of those surveyed agreed that in the long run, market access would be the hardest part of the agriculture negotiation.

Trade & Investment: Just 21 percent of the surveyed population thought it likely agreement would be reached in Cancun on modalities for investment negotiations, while 62 percent thought a positive result would be unlikely. In our April survey, only 38 percent or respondents thought a result on investment unlikely. Capital and Geneva officials are in large agreement this time around.

Geographic Indications: Overall, 67 percent of those surveyed doubted the Doha commitment to reach agreement in Cancun would be met. Officials in capitals are much more optimistic than those in Geneva, where 85 percent said there would not be a deal on G.I.s for wines and spirits.
Special & Differential Treatment: 64 percent of all those surveyed believe that the S&D issues are tactically motivated as a way for developing countries to gain advantage elsewhere and that failure to achieve results in this area would not have serious negative consequences for the overall negotiations. 21 percent disagreed and thought progress on S&D would be important to the final package.

Part 2: Other Issues

TRIPS & Public Health: We asked two questions: (1) would a result be achieved by the time of Cancun and (2) would continued failure in this area have serious overall consequences? In the latest poll, 64 percent of all respondents think a result will be achieved by the end of the Cancun meeting – which represents a big improvement since April when poll no. 2 showed just 25% feeling a result by Cancun would be possible. Seventy percent of those surveyed think a failure to resolve this longstanding issue would have significant negative implications for other issues on the Ministerial agenda. Capital-based officials are slightly more concerned than those in Geneva.

Montreal Mini-Ministerial: Most of those surveyed (52%) did not expect the Montreal meeting to contribute importantly to an eventual consensus on level of ambition in agriculture negotiations and the industrial market access talks. 31 percent thought the meeting would make a positive contribution.

Impact of Economic Circumstances on the WTO Round: We asked whether people agreed with the theory espoused by some that rounds tend to progress better when times are tough and suggested that an improving economy might complicate the prospects for the Doha Round. Only 9.5 percent of participants thought an improving economy could be bad news for the WTO Round. As an aside, a number questioned whether there are in fact signs of improvement in the global economy.

EU Enlargement and the Doha Round: Only 24 percent of respondents saw a direct correlation between a successful EU enlargement exercise in 2004 and the on-time completion of the Round.

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