SUMMARY

The Institute’s second Global Trade Opinion Poll was conducted in the last week of March and was again designed to gauge the extent to which key issues in the multilateral WTO Doha Development Agenda (DDA) are likely to be positively resolved by the time of the September Ministerial Conference in Cancun, Mexico. Our first poll indicated trouble ahead for negotiators and the results of this second poll are not materially different. As anticipated, we missed the March 31 target for agreement on agriculture modalities and now more than 80 percent of poll respondents doubt a result will be achieved by the Geneva summer break at the end of July. At the same time, poll results are more or less unchanged from last time in respect of expectations for investment, competition and the dispute settlement negotiations. A large number of important issues look like they will be on the front burner in Cancun. IIBE&L’s next poll will be conducted in the third week of May.

Part 1: WTO DDA Negotiations

Agriculture: The first two questions of this poll dealt with the timing of agreement on agriculture modalities. Not surprisingly, by the time of the poll, nobody in Geneva or in capital cities held out hope of an agreement by the March 31 deadline. The long term picture is not much better: 83 percent of all respondents doubt an agreement on modalities will be reached by the end of July summer break. Non-Geneva respondents are even more pessimistic: 91% doubt agreement on agriculture modalities by the summer break.

Dispute Settlement: Not much change from last time. Geneva and capital-based respondents are in agreement. Sixty-six percent doubt that the mandated package of improvements and clarifications will be agreed by the end of May. Twenty-six percent of respondents give the negotiations a 50-50 chance of finishing on time. In our previous survey, 60% of those polled had doubts that this negotiation could be completed on time.

Trade & Investment: Again, not much movement since last time in opinions on the chances for agreement on negotiating modalities for investment. 46% (v. 43% last time) give agreement in Cancun a 50-50 chance and 38% doubt a positive outcome at that Ministerial. Geneva and capital-based respondents are in broad agreement.

Trade & Competition: Overall results are more or less steady with the polling six weeks ago. Fifty-one percent of all respondents still doubt a consensus will be reached on modalities in Cancun. Interestingly, 72 percent of capital-based respondents doubted a successful outcome on competition in Cancun.

Geographic Indications: Fifty-four percent of all respondents (but 82% of capital-based respondents) disagreed with the proposition that an eventual agreement should oblige legal protection of GIs on the basis of a notification to the registry. Notwithstanding the obvious
sensitivities on this point, a surprisingly large proportion (26%) of all respondents could not clearly express their position on this proposition.

Part II Other Issues

TRIPS & Public Health: Some disappointing results here. Last time, 43% of respondents felt an outcome could be reached well before Cancun. Now only 25% of all respondents are of that positive view. Respondents in capitals are more pessimistic, with only 9 percent agreeing with the proposition that the outstanding issues would be worked out before Cancun.

GMO Dispute Settlement: No change here from the first poll. We still have sixty percent of respondents believing that a WTO challenge on GMO restrictions is likely in 2003. The view in capitals is more or less the same.

Services Offers: Forty-eight percent of Geneva-based respondents and a surprising 82 percent of capital-based respondents agreed with the proposition that there would be few if any offers tabled to enhance market access for so-called public-sector services (health, education, public infrastructure, etc.). They agreed that this outcome is largely due to pressure successfully applied to WTO Member Governments by NGOs and public sector unions.

War in Iraq: It goes without saying that the views expressed by respondents two weeks ago when this second poll was initiated might well have changed by now. Our poll’s proposition was that a short (undefined) war in Iraq would have no negative effect on the WTO Doha Round. At the time they responded, 58 percent of all respondents (and 73% of capital-based participants) agreed with this proposition.

Note on Methodology:
As with our first survey, seventy people were included in this poll. The survey population included Geneva Ambassadors and other government negotiators, WTO Secretariat officials, and private sector, government and academic representatives in Geneva, Brussels, Paris, Washington, Ottawa, Tokyo, Canberra and Wellington. Participation in the poll is confidential and anonymous. Ten propositions were put to respondents who were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed / disagreed the propositions were likely to hold true.

Reactions to the Institute’s initiative in our first poll were quite positive. In the hope that these periodic opinion polls continue to be of interest to those following the progress of work in the WTO, I thank those who took the time to participate in this survey.

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