

**UNEP-MEA MEETING ON ENHANCING  
MEA AND WTO INFORMATION EXCHANGE**

**SESSION ON INFORMATION EXCHANGE AND OBSERVER STATUS:  
OPENING REMARKS BY THE WTO SECRETARIAT**

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*SPEAKING POINTS*

- Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, I would like to start by expressing my appreciation to the UNEP for inviting me to participate in this meeting on enhancing MEA and WTO information exchange.
- This meeting comes at a very opportune moment in the context of the Doha Development Agenda.
- The Doha Ministerial Conference marked the beginning of a new phase in the consideration of environment issues within the WTO, symbolised by the words cooperation and negotiation.
- As you are well aware, Paragraph 31 (ii) of the Doha Ministerial Declaration instructs Members to start negotiations (1) on "*procedures for regular information exchange between MEA Secretariats and the relevant WTO committees*", and (2) on "*the criteria for the granting of observer status*".

- But I would also like to recall the preambular part of the Doha Ministerial Declaration which clearly welcomes "*the WTO's continued cooperation with UNEP and other inter-governmental environmental organizations*" and encourages "*efforts to promote cooperation between the WTO and relevant international environmental and developmental organizations*".
- This, I believe, shows the particular importance of the meeting organized today by UNEP, and tomorrow by the WTO.
- I will address in turn the existing practice of information exchange between MEAs/UNEP and the WTO (I), and then the issue of observership (II).

## **I. MEAS -WTO INFORMATION EXCHANGE**

- Concerning the first part of this mandate, i.e. procedures for regular information exchange between MEA Secretariats and the relevant WTO committees, let me emphasize, that, much exchange has already been taking place between MEAs and the WTO Secretariats.
- This exchange of information has taken three forms: (A) through WTO Regional Seminars on Trade and Environment; (B) through Information Sessions in the CTE and within MEAs; and (C) through exchange of documents.

### **A. INFORMATION EXCHANGE THROUGH WTO REGIONAL SEMINARS ON TRADE AND ENVIRONMENT**

- First, one essential part of the technical assistance activities of the WTO in the field of trade and environment is the

organization of Regional Seminars on Trade and Environment.

- These regional seminars have been carried out in the three official languages of the WTO and in main regions of the world (in Latin America, Caribbean countries, Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, Asia, and at the end of November, also in the Pacific).
- In order to bring to the regions the experience and perspective of other international institutions specialized in the field of trade and environment, the WTO started, in 1999, the practice of regularly inviting UNEP, UNCTAD and MEAs to participate in these seminars.
- So far, four MEAs have been involved: the CITES, the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- MEAs, UNEP and UNCTAD have used these opportunities in a very effective manner to inform trade and environment officials of their activities as well as of their own perspective on the trade and environment debate.
- The presentations by MEA, UNEP and UNCTAD Secretariats have illustrated the relationship between environment and trade in very concrete terms and have therefore been much appreciated by seminar participants.
- The UNEP and UNCTAD efforts in addressing the capacity building needs relevant to the Doha Development Agenda are an important and necessary complement to our own technical assistance activities.

- Their presence at our regional seminars on trade and environment has enabled them to respond directly to questions regarding the nature of their capacity building activities in this area.
- As set out in the Doha Declaration itself, WTO cooperation with these agencies needs not only to continue, but be reinforced. The importance of cooperation was further stressed at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. Let me recall in this regard paragraph 91.c) of the Plan of Implementation which *"encourage efforts to promote cooperation on trade, environment and development, including in the field of providing technical assistance to developing countries, between the secretariats of WTO, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNEP and other relevant international environmental and development and regional organizations"*.

#### B. MEA INFORMATION SESSIONS AND WTO SIDE-EVENTS

- Information exchange with MEAs has also taken place within CTE meetings.
- Since 1997 the CTE has invited a number of MEA Secretariats to participate in a total of six Information Sessions.
- These MEA Information Sessions have been organized around several topics: Trade-Related Aspects and Developments in Environmental Fora; Compliance and Dispute Settlement Provisions in MEAs and the WTO; and Technical Assistance, Capacity-Building and Information Exchange.

- For your information, you will find a complete list of the MEAs that have been involved in these sessions, as well as a list of the documents they submitted, in document TN/TE/S/2.
- The counterpart of MEAs coming to the CTE to brief Members about new developments or about special topics, is the organization by the WTO, since the beginning of 2002, of technical assistance workshops (so-called "side events") in parallel to some of the main meetings of MEAs.
- The objective of such events is to enhance understanding of WTO rules, and to create a forum for information exchange between the WTO Secretariat and MEAs.
- Such events are important (i) in order for developing country members to these agreements to be kept informed about recent developments concerning the WTO Doha Development Agenda on Trade and Environment, and (ii) in order for the WTO Secretariat to follow the new developments occurring in the MEAs.
- By the end of this year, the WTO will have held four such side events, at the Second Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), the Sixth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD, the Twelfth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CITES and the Fourteenth Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol.

#### C. MEA-WTO DOCUMENT EXCHANGE

- Information exchange between the WTO and MEAs has also taken place simply by exchanging documents.

- Documents on recent developments within MEAs have been regularly distributed within the CTE either by MEAs themselves or by the WTO Secretariat.
- On this matter, you may find interesting that the WTO has recently adopted new procedures for the circulation and derestriction of WTO documents, whereby Members' submissions and Secretariat documents are now automatically unrestricted except if requested otherwise by the Member or the WTO body concerned.
- Concerning minutes of WTO bodies meetings, these are automatically derestricted 45 days after the date of circulation.
- Unrestricted and derestricted documents are immediately available to everyone on the WTO website.

#### D. UNEP-WTO COOPERATION

- I would like now to underline particularly the role played by UNEP, especially due the fact that it administers a number of MEAs, in building up our practice of information exchange and cooperation with MEAs.
- The Cooperation Arrangement concluded between the WTO and UNEP Secretariats in November 1999 at the Seattle Ministerial Conference has been followed by a major improvement of the cooperation between the two Secretariats.
- Thus, UNEP has regularly organized very useful back-to-back meetings with the CTE on topics of specific interest to CTE Members.

- Let me recall, for instance, the workshop organized by UNEP back-to-back with the CTE and CTESS meetings in March 2002 on Technical Assistance, Capacity Building and MEAs, which was very well received by WTO Members.

## **II. MEA OBSERVERSHIP**

- A number of international intergovernmental organizations enjoy observer status in the CTE and amongst them are UNEP and the following MEAs: the CBD, CITES, ICCAT, and the UNFCCC.
- At present, only two MEA requests for observer status in the CTE are pending, that of the ITTO and recently the Protocol of Montreal.
- But, the problem remains that MEAs do not have observer status in the CTE Special Session.
- The state-of-play at the moment is that the issue has been left in the hands of two different fora, the Trade Negotiations Committee, with respect to WTO negotiating bodies, and the General Council, with respect to WTO non-negotiating bodies.
- At the second meeting of the CTESS in June 2002, a number of delegations explicitly stated that they saw the issue of observer status in the CTESS to be a horizontal one, which had to be settled by either the General Council or the Trade Negotiations Committee.
- As a matter of comparison, MEA Secretariats address the question of observership in a very flexible way by allowing

international organizations to attend meetings as observers if an interest is expressed in doing so.

- On this basis, the WTO Secretariat attends some conferences of the parties of the MEAs.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

- Let me conclude these remarks by highlighting the fact that the Doha negotiations are the first set of comprehensive trade negotiations to be conducted under the aegis of the WTO and that it will be conducted among an unprecedented number of governments.
- It is generally speaking an extremely challenging period for the WTO and its Members.
- In the field of environment, and especially concerning MEAs and WTO information exchange, I would like to emphasize that the relationship between the WTO and MEAs, UNEP and UNCTAD is of great importance to the work carried out in the WTO and should be continuously pursued and further encouraged.
- Cooperation between these institutions is key to ensure that trade contributes to sustainable development.
- Thank you.