

Press release
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FTA
Foreign Trade Association

EUROPEAN TRADE CALLS FOR PROGRESS AND A CLEAR TIMELINE OF THE WTO DOHA ROUND

The Foreign Trade Association (FTA), representing European retailers and importers, appeals to the members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to shape the necessary conditions for a successful outcome of the current Doha Development Round. "At the eight Ministerial Conference in Geneva this week, it is crucial to create a positive atmosphere in order to get the negotiations back on track", said the Secretary General of the FTA, Jan Eggert.

The FTA recognises the practical difficulty of reaching an agreement among more than 150 WTO members, including industrialised states and emerging powers as well as developing countries, all having different positions and targets. But this challenging context should not serve as an excuse for the incapacity to deliver. Ten years after the round was launched in 2001, European retailers run out of patience mainly as their businesses are directly affected by numerous persisting trade burdens. A global agreement would help to reduce these impediments by lowering the general level of custom duties and facilitating investment to the benefit of retailers and consumers.

"All parties have to reflect over the crucial importance of a successful outcome of the ongoing round. Too many actors engaged in the Doha talks appear to be inflexible. The WTO must be understood as a dynamic and progressing organisation regularly adapting its legal and institutional frame to an ever more globalised economy. The WTO should not survive on pure procedural activities", Secretary General Eggert added.

Trade is a driving force to create prosperity and economic growth - this is particularly true with regard to the prevailing uncertainty about the global economy. The conclusion of the Doha Round would be a tremendous step forward in overcoming the current crisis and re-establishing confidence among market participants. Protectionism and growing tendencies to close markets are in contrast counterproductive remedies.

The FTA expects a commitment from Ministers - at the summit or at least in the following months - that negotiations will be revived soon. Moreover a roadmap should be designed

including clear objectives and a plausible time frame.

The FTA is the association for European commerce that specialises in foreign trade issues. It is committed to achieving its goal of a true free trade environment. For 30 years it has supported its members, consisting of national trade associations and companies from all over Europe, by providing expertise and up-to-date information and by campaigning on their behalf against protectionist measures in the European and international arena.

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