

Cancún Ministerial Conference ends without agreement

The Cancún Ministerial Conference ended on 14 September after Chairperson Luis Ernesto Derbez concluded that members remained entrenched on the "Singapore" issues. Shortly before 18:00 Cancun time, Mexican Trade Minister Luis Ernesto Derbez formally closed the Fifth Session of the WTO Ministerial Conference, without agreement on a Ministerial Text.

The meeting had collapsed in mid-afternoon over ongoing deep divisions among Members, particularly over whether and how to launch negotiations on the 'Singapore' issues of investment, competition, transparency in government procurement and trade facilitation.

Minister Luis Ernesto Derbez proposed a six-paragraph ministerial statement, which was approved in the closing session at almost 6:00 pm. The paragraph instructs member governments' officials "to continue working on outstanding issues with a renewed sense of urgency and purpose and taking fully into account all the views we have expressed in this Conference."

The ministers asked the General Council Chairman and the WTO Director-General, to coordinate the work and to convene a meeting of the General Council at senior officials level no later than 15 December 2003 to take necessary action.

Cancún Ministerial Text

1. As we conclude our Fifth Ministerial Conference in Cancún, we would like to express our deep appreciation to the Government and people of Mexico for the excellent organization and warm hospitality we have received in Cancún.
2. At this meeting we have welcomed Cambodia and Nepal as the first least-developed countries to accede to the WTO since its establishment.
3. All participants have worked hard and constructively to make progress as required under the Doha mandates. We have, indeed, made considerable progress. However, more work needs to be done in some key areas to enable us to proceed towards the conclusion of the negotiations in fulfilment of the commitments we took at Doha.
4. We therefore instruct our officials to continue working on outstanding issues with a renewed sense of urgency and purpose and taking fully into account all the views we have expressed in this Conference. We ask the Chairman of the General Council, working in close co-operation with the Director-General, to coordinate this work and to convene a meeting of the General Council at Senior Officials level no later than 15 December 2003 to take the action necessary at that stage to enable us to move towards a successful and timely conclusion of the negotiations. We shall continue to exercise close personal supervision of this process.

5. We will bring with us into this new phase all the valuable work that has been done at this Conference. In those areas where we have reached a high level of convergence on texts, we undertake to maintain this convergence while working for an acceptable overall outcome.

6. Notwithstanding this setback, we reaffirm all our Doha Declarations and Decisions and recommit ourselves to working to implement them fully and faithfully.