

**CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN THE CANCUN WTO MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE  
10-14 SEPTEMBER 2003**

Date	Events
<p><b>Day 1: 10 September 2003 Wednesday</b></p>	<p>The Conference was formally opened at around 9.30 am, 10 September 2003.</p> <p>The Convention Centre had previously been sealed from further entrance by delegates and observers by 9.00 am due to security procedures for the later entry of Mexican President Vicente Fox. Only 3 delegates per Member and intergovernmental observer, and 1 representative per NGO, were allowed inside the plenary session hall for the opening ceremony. The formal opening session was closed by the Conference Chair, Mexican Foreign Minister Derbez, at around 11.30 am, with the announcement that the first business session will re-open five minutes later for the adoption of the agenda and the organization of the work of the Conference. These first business items were important because they would set the parameters of the negotiations – i.e. which documents would serve as the basis for the discussions – and the negotiating mechanism to be used – i.e. how the negotiations are to be conducted. Given the intense dissatisfaction among many developing countries with the way that the 24 August draft Ministerial text was prepared by the General Council Chair (Uruguay Ambassador del Castillo) and submitted “on his own responsibility” to the Ministerial Conference, the possibility existed that some developing countries would try to raise a point of order during the first business session with respect to the use of the 24 August text as the basis for the negotiations, as well as with respect to the negotiating mechanism to be used.</p> <p>In any event, during the first business session which was conducted in the plenary hall where the ceremonial opening was held, the 24 August text, together with submissions and proposals made by Geneva by Members in relation thereto, was implicitly adopted by the Conference without any objection through references made to them by Chair Derbez during his discussion of the proposed agenda and request that such agenda be approved. Furthermore, no objections were raised to Chair Derbez’ announcement of his selection of the following ministers as “facilitators” for the various informal issue-based negotiating groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Agriculture</b> — George Yeo Yong-Bon, Singapore’s Trade and Industry Minister</li> <li>• <b>Non-agricultural market access (NAMA)</b> — Henry Tang Ying-yen, Hong Kong China’s Financial Secretary</li> </ul>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Day 1: 10 September 2003 Wednesday</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Development issues</b> — Mukhisa Kituyi, Kenya’s Trade and Industry Minister</li> <li>• <b>“Singapore” issues<sup>1</sup></b> — Pierre Pettigrew, Canada’s, International Trade Minister</li> <li>• <b>Other issues</b> — Clement Rohee, Guyana’s Foreign Trade and International Cooperation Minister (this includes the TRIPS registry for geographical indications for wines and spirits, and other topics)</li> </ul> <p>Aside from the traditional assumption of office by the host Member as Conference Chair, no other officers were elected by the Conference, even though the WTO’s 1996 Rules of Procedure for Ministerial Conferences provide for the election of a Chair and 3 vice-chairs and did not provide for the appointment by the Chair of any other officers or “facilitators.”</p> <p>The first business session closed at around 12.30 pm with the adoption of the organization of work. Beginning at around 2.30 pm, the facilitators began their individual and group consultations. Facilitators may meet with Members individually, or meet with them in small groups according to region, grouping, or issues, or meet with all Members in “open-ended” – i.e. any minister from any Member could attend the meetings – and “informal” – i.e. no notes are taken and any outcomes are subject to ratification by the formal plenary of the Conference – consultations. The facilitators are expected to submit their reports and draft texts to the Conference Chair based on their assessments of where the balance of compromise might lie as a result of the consultations. The facilitators had flexibility to decide what other procedures to use in order to move Members towards a consensus outcome.</p> <p>An additional negotiating group, facilitated by WTO Director-General Supachai, was created in the evening to deal with the sectoral initiative on cotton issue raised by some West and Central African cotton-producing states.</p> <p>Outside of the meeting rooms, the G-90 – a loose grouping representing almost 90 developing countries (including Bangladesh (on behalf of LDCs), Jamaica (on behalf of the Caribbean Community), Botswana, China, Cuba, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Nigeria, Philippines, Tanzania, Venezuela, Zambia, and Zimbabwe – issued a press release stating that “there is no explicit consensus on the commencement of negotiations on modalities” for Singapore issues and that, therefore, the clarificatory process should be continued.</p> <p>On the streets of Cancun, about 10 kilometers away from the Convention Centre and beyond 5 sequential layers of steel barriers and police and army roadblocks, a massive and peaceful demonstration of between 5,000-10,000 people, mostly from peasants and indigenous peoples from Mexico but with significant presence as well from non-Mexican anti-globalization activists, took place to protest the impact that trade policies espoused by the WTO have been having on people’s rights, food security, rural development, and the environment. The protesters were able to breach a section of the metal barrier as the police pulled back. In a tragic climax to the protest, Mr. Lee Kyung-Hae, a former president of the Korean Farmers’ Federation, climbed to the top of the</p>
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<sup>1</sup> “Singapore issues” refer to the proposed negotiations for WTO agreements that would fall within the scope of the WTO’s existing dispute settlement mechanism and which would: (i) limit the right of governments to regulate foreign investors (*trade and investment*); (ii) prevent governments from supporting domestic enterprises against foreign competitors (*trade and competition policy*); (iii) require governments to undertake public notification procedures with respect to government purchases in order to make it easier for foreign companies to bid for government contracts in competition with domestic suppliers (*transparency in government procurement*); and (iv) require governments to undertake changes in their domestic customs administration and import entry procedures to make importation easier (*trade facilitation*).

	<p>fallen barrier and then stabbed himself. He passed away in hospital. In the spring of 2003, Mr. Lee had been staging a solo protest at the gates of the WTO building in Geneva to protest and highlight the impact that WTO rules have had on small farmers and rural communities in Korea as well as elsewhere.</p> <p>Inside the formal and ceremonial plenary session opening the Conference, around 40-50 NGO activists accredited as NGO observers staged their own counterpart demonstration by holding up “WTO Obsolete” and “WTO Anti-Development” placards and shouting slogans for about 15-20 minutes before settling down.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Day 2: 11 September 2003 Thursday</b></p>	<p>Intense negotiations began on Day 2, which started a meeting of the Conference Chair and the facilitators at 8.30 am followed by the first informal Heads of Delegation (HOD) meeting beginning at 11 am. The facilitators reported to the HOD on the results of their consultations with Members the previous day, with most saying that there were wide gaps among Members on various issues. At this HOD, many Members, especially from developing countries, stressed their opposition to the launch of negotiations on Singapore issues. The afternoon was devoted to open-ended informal meetings of the various working groups.</p> <p>The Singapore issues working group met from 1-3 pm. Most developing countries restated their opposition to the launch of negotiations and stressed that given the lack of consensus for the launch of negotiations on these issues, further clarificatory work needed to be done in Geneva and that the Conference should hence move forward to discuss other issues such as agriculture. Other Members, especially the EU, Japan, Korea, Switzerland, said that enough clarificatory work had taken place in the 7 years since the Singapore ministerial and that negotiations should hence commence. There were also other suggestions that perhaps negotiations in only transparency in government procurement and trade facilitation be launched while those on investment and competition could be delayed. No consensus was attained at that meeting.</p> <p>The Development working group met from 3.30-5.30 pm and focused on special and differential treatment (S&amp;D); implementation; technical assistance; LDCs; commodity issues; small economies; trade, debt and finance; and trade and technology transfer. Many developing countries raised proposals with respect to changes in the 24 August draft text, including inter alia the creation of a negotiating group to focus on implementation issues. This particular proposal was opposed by developed countries. There was also significant disagreement among Members with respect to whether the package of 24 agreed proposals contained in the 24 August draft text should be accepted as “advance payment” in exchange for deferred agreement and future work on the other proposals. No consensus was attained at that meeting.</p> <p>The Other issues working group met from 2-3.30 pm and focused on trade and environment and on geographical indications. There was significant disagreement among Members, with many developing countries opposed, with respect to an EU proposal for the inclusion of a reference to eco-labelling and to the holding of dedicated sessions thereon in 2004. There was also much disagreement over the EU’s proposal to call for an acceleration of the trade and environment negotiations and for ministers to invite the secretariats of selected multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) as observers in the negotiations. On the negotiations for the creation of a multilateral register for geographical indications for wines and spirits, there was disagreement with respect to the deadline for such negotiations. No consensus was attained at that meeting.</p>

<b>Day 2: 11 September 2003 Thursday</b>	<p>The Agriculture working group met from 9-10.30 pm. Prior to that meeting, the facilitator, Minister Yeo of Singapore, had held three informal meetings between the G-21<sup>2</sup> and the US, G-21 and the EU, and US and EU, to try to facilitate discussions among these groups and bring them to a consensus on the draft text. During the working group meeting, Members continued to present significantly divergent views, with the US, EU, and other agriculture-subsidizing countries refusing to agree to proposals to substantially reduce or eliminate their subsidies while at the same time pressing for increased market access in developing countries. In addition, the SP Alliance<sup>3</sup>, led by Indonesia and the Philippines, was also a major developing country coalition that sought to have its voice heard in the agriculture discussions to ensure that protection for strategic products is provided for in any framework agreement. No consensus was attained at that meeting.</p> <p>The NAMA working group met in the late afternoon. The discussion focused on the formula to be used for tariff reduction and the approach to be used with respect to sectoral elimination of tariffs. There continued to be significant divergences of views among Members, with most developing countries opposing tariff harmonization, calling for the application of special and differential treatment and the principle of “less than full reciprocity”, and to have only a voluntary approach to sectoral tariff elimination. No consensus was attained at that meeting.</p> <p>The Cotton initiative working group was convened by DG Supachai in the course of the day. However, there were wide differences in the positions of the countries that were involved in this working group – mainly the West and Central African proponents (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali), US, EU, Canada – with the African countries insisting that there is a need for the rapid elimination of cotton subsidies being provided to developed country cotton farmers while developed countries (mainly the US) insisted that the cotton issue should be tackled using an integrated approach covering all measures affecting cotton and man-made fibers. No consensus was achieved.</p>
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<sup>2</sup> The “G-21” is a group of developing countries that had submitted a framework proposal (see WT/MIN(03)/W/6, 4 September 2003) as an alternative to the 24 August text on agriculture. The group is calling for substantial reductions in agricultural subsidies of developed countries and increased market access for developing countries’ agricultural products. The group finally included Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, China, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Egypt, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, South Africa, Thailand, and Venezuela. El Salvador was a member of the group but withdrew from it on 12 September 2003. Indonesia decided to join the group the last day of the Conference. Egypt also formally joined the group by issuing a revised WTO document adding its name to the group (WT/MIN(03)/W/6/Add.1, 9 September 2003). It was also reported that several African countries had also joined but this has not been confirmed. In addition, African countries presented their common position (with LDCs and the ACP countries) with respect to the agriculture negotiations that basically reflected the G-21 position (see WT/MIN(03)/W/17, 12 September 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Otherwise called the “G-32” or the “SP/SSM Alliance”, this is a group of developing countries united around the issue of ensuring that any framework for modalities of the agriculture negotiations contain operational and effective provisions that would allow developing countries to self-designate “strategic products” (SP) – i.e. products that need to be protected from import competition due to food security or rural development objectives – for purposes of exempting these from any tariff reduction commitments and establish a Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM) for use by all developing countries. The group included Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Mongolia, Montserrat, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, the Philippines, Saint Kitts, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uganda, Venezuela, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

	<p>Outside of the meeting rooms, some of the G-90 ministers called a press briefing in the Convention Centre’s press briefing area to reiterate their opposition to the launch of negotiations on Singapore issues. It was at this press briefing that NGOs, led by the World Development Movement (WDM) and Friends of the Earth International (FOEI), distributed t-shirts and badge cords that stated the dictionary meaning of “explicit consensus” to the press and delegates in order to show support for the G-90’s negotiating position on Singapore issues.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Day 3: 12 September 2003 Friday</b></p>	<p>The second informal HOD was convened from 10-10.45 am. The facilitators were asked to report on the results of their consultations with their working groups. All facilitators basically reported that there continued to remain wide differences and gaps in the views of Members with respect to the issues tackled in their respective working groups. The rest of the day was devoted to consultations in the working groups with the facilitators.</p> <p>The Singapore issues working group met from 1-2 pm. Most developing countries continued to maintain their opposition to the launch of negotiations on Singapore issues, saying that the explicit consensus requirement for such launch and the modalities as laid down in the Doha Ministerial Declaration has not been met. The proponents for negotiations such as the EU, on the other hand, kept on insisting that negotiations should be launched. Other countries, however, signaled their willingness to explore a “third way” by “unbundling” the issues through the launch of negotiations on one or two and continuing the clarificatory process in Geneva on the remainder. Consensus, however, could not be reached.</p> <p>The Development working group met from 3.30-4.30 pm. While differences were narrowed with respect to the text on LDCs, small economies, and commodity policy, significant gaps still remained with respect to how to treat issues relating to implementation, S&amp;D, and extension of geographical indications to products other than wines and spirits.</p> <p>The Agriculture working group met from 4-5.30 pm. Members continued to reiterate their established positions such that significant divergences continued to remain. A coalition of countries belong to the African Union, LDC Group, and the ACP (Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States), submitted a new position paper calling for a framework for the agriculture negotiations that insisted on strengthened disciplines on production and export subsidies, effective provisions on Special Products and the Special safeguard mechanism for developing countries and the need to address the problem of erosion of preference on exports of developing countries. No consensus was reached.</p> <p>The Other issues working group met from 8-9 pm. Members came closer to consensus on wording inviting selected MEA secretariats as observers in the trade and environment negotiations conducted in the special sessions of the Committee on Trade and Environment (CTESS); on TRIPS non-violation complaints; and on the relationship of the TRIPS Agreement to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and traditional knowledge. However, there continued to be gaps in positions with respect to the negotiations for the multilateral register for geographical indications for wines and spirits; eco-labelling; and on some services issues (e.g. dates for revised services offers).</p> <p>No meeting was held for the NAMA working group during the day. The facilitator, however, stated that he had been circulating draft texts to, and holding bilateral meetings with, the participants in the course of the day.</p> <p>DG Supachai’s further consultations with the Cotton issue working group in the course of the day also met without any success as positions continued to remain far apart on the core issues of the elimination of cotton subsidies and possible compensation for losses to the affected countries.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Day 3: 12 September 2003 Friday</b></p>	

	<p>A third informal HOD was convened from 9.45-10 pm. All the facilitators reported the results of their consultations to the HOD, and stated that they would be submitting their draft texts to the Conference Chair in the course of the evening. Chair Derbez said that once the facilitators' texts are in, he would consolidate them into a draft text and circulate it to all Members by lunchtime the next day during an informal HOD to be convened to introduce the new draft. The meeting would then be suspended to allow Members to study the revised version and then re-convened in the afternoon. All the facilitators' working groups would be folded into a single process to be run by the Chair, and any further consultations will be conducted by the Chair and DG Supachai.</p> <p>Outside of the meeting rooms, the SP/SSM Alliance, represented by Indonesia, called a press briefing to reiterate the alliance's call for the draft text to include an operational reference to the concept of "strategic products" as an integral part of the framework for the agriculture negotiations.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Day 4: 13 September 2003 Saturday</b></p>	<p>Because the Conference Chair had not yet finished consolidating the draft text by lunchtime, the scheduled lunchtime fourth meeting of the informal HOD was postponed to 1 pm. In the meantime, during the late morning of 13 September, there was a small "green room" meeting of around 8 participants to discuss the Singapore issues text that would go into the new revised Chair's draft Ministerial text. This "green room" meeting, however, ended without any agreement being arrived at.</p> <p>The fourth informal HOD meeting of the Conference was finally convened at around 2 pm. After a brief introduction of the main points and revisions made in the text as compared to its 24 August version, the Conference Chair distributed the revised draft Ministerial text to the participants and then suspended the meeting to give delegations time to study the text.</p> <p>A fifth meeting of the informal HOD was convened at 7 pm. During that meeting, most ministers criticized various parts of the revised draft text. For most developing countries, the major points of criticism revolved around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) the lack of ambition seen in the text with respect to the elimination of agricultural subsidies vis-à-vis the commitments on market access that would be imposed on developing countries;</li> <li>(ii) the explicit launch of negotiations on transparency in government procurement, trade facilitation, and trade and investment, and the acceleration of the process for launching negotiations on trade and competition policy, even though a majority of Members had expressed their opposition to negotiations on all four issues;</li> <li>(iii) the high level of ambition seen in the text on NAMA with respect to the tariff cutting formula used and the extent of commitments to sectoral initiatives.</li> </ul> <p>In addition, African countries criticized the revised text for not reflecting their proposal to phase out cotton subsidies and for the provision of transitional compensation to African cotton producers during such phase out, in favor of adopting the US approach to linking the elimination of cotton subsidies to non-cotton-related issues such as trade in textiles and synthetic fibers. Finally, many African and Caribbean countries said that too little ambition was reflected in the revised draft text in terms of operationalizing special and differential treatment. There was also some disagreement with the idea of institutionalizing the invitation extended to selected MEAs, UNEP, and UNCTAD to participate as "invitees" in the negotiations being conducted in the special sessions of the CTE.</p>

	<p>On the other hand, many developed countries viewed the text as being too ambitious in pushing for the elimination of agricultural subsidies and rejected calls by some developing countries for adjusting downwards the level of ambition on market access. The EU, Korea, Japan, and Switzerland, in particular, felt that negotiations on all four Singapore issues should be launched, not just on three. The US and EU also felt that the NAMA text did not have enough ambition in terms of cutting tariff barriers, especially in developing countries. The EU, supported by Norway, Switzerland, Canada, Korea, and eastern European countries, also pushed for the inclusion of additional language that would require the CTE to dedicate sessions to discussing eco-labeling issues as part of its post-Cancun work program.</p> <p>The fifth informal HOD ended at around 1 am, 14 September 2003, Sunday.</p> <p>On the streets of Cancun, another massive and peaceful demonstration was staged by thousands of Mexican peasants and other activists. Center-stage was taken by hundreds of Korean protestors who managed to tear down a section of the metal barrier sealing off the Cancun Hotel Zone (where the Convention Centre is located) from the mainland. There was no violence, however, as the Koreans and other demonstrators resorted to non-violent and symbolic gestures of protest such as the lighting of candles in memory of Mr. Lee Kyung-Hae, a Korean farmer who had killed himself in protest of the impact of free trade on Korean farmers.</p>
<p><b>Day 5: 14 September 2003 Sunday</b></p>	<p>Following the close of the informal HOD that ran from 7 pm, 13 September, to 1 am, 14 September, a small “green room” meeting attended by nine ministers (from the US, EU, Mexico, Brazil, China, India, Malaysia, Kenya, and South Africa) was convened by the Conference Chair from 1 to 3 am, 14 September, to discuss Singapore issues and try to move the opposing views closer together. However, no consensus was reached.</p> <p>A sixth meeting of the informal HOD was scheduled for 12 noon of 14 September but was postponed “until further notice” due to the fact that for virtually the entire morning of 14 September (from around 8.30 am to 12.30 pm), a bigger “green room” meeting attended by around 30 ministers (including the US, EU, Brazil, China, India, Mexico, Malaysia, Kenya, Philippines, South Africa, Botswana, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Canada, Japan, Korea, Australia, Switzerland, and several others) was being held at the WTO Secretariat’s offices in the Convention Centre. The meeting was chaired by Conference Chair Derbez and the discussions focused on how to deal with the text’s paragraphs on Singapore issues. According to Minister Derbez, he asked participants to focus their attention on Singapore issues because the question of whether or not to launch negotiations had been one of the contested issues most frequently raised by ministers during their interventions and speeches in the various informal HOD meetings, especially during the late night informal HOD of 13 September. He hoped that if agreement could be reached on Singapore issues at that “green room” meeting, they could then move on to discuss the other contentious parts of the revised text – i.e. agriculture and NAMA.</p> <p>Again, at the start of the meeting, ministers stuck to their positions, with most developing countries insisting on their opposition to the launch of Singapore issue negotiations, while the EU, Korea, Japan, and Switzerland, kept pushing for the launch on all four. To break the deadlock, Conference Chair Derbez purportedly proposed that negotiations be fully launched on transparency in government procurement and on trade facilitation, while trade and investment and trade and competition policy would then be dropped from the WTO’s agenda altogether. The EU reportedly agreed to this formula. Other ministers, especially from developing countries, said that they were still opposed to the launch of negotiations on transparency in government procurement and on trade facilitation, while other (like Japan, Korea, Switzerland) said that they were still interested in seeing investment and competition negotiations be launched or</p>

<p><b>Day 5: 14 September 2003 Sunday</b></p>	<p>at least remain on the WTO agenda. At this point (around 12.30 pm), Conference Chair Derbez suspended the “green room” meeting so as to enable ministers to consult with their delegations regarding his proposal.</p> <p>During the break, ministers from the African Union, ACP, and LDCs, had a combined meeting. They agreed that they would stick to their common position of being opposed to the launch of negotiations on all four Singapore issues. As a result of this agreement, Minister NKate of Botswana’s mandate from the AU/ACP/LDC group to oppose negotiations on all four Singapore issues remained unchanged. EC Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy also had a meeting with the EU’s Council of Ministers to ask for a change in his mandate to allow him to agree to drop some of the Singapore issues in exchange for the launch of negotiations on the other Singapore issues. There was also a meeting of the core group of the G-90 grouping that had been opposing the launch of negotiations on Singapore issues, attended by, among others, Malaysia, Philippines, India, China, Kenya.</p> <p>After a break of about 1 hour, the “green room” meeting reconvened at around 1.30 pm. Botswana on behalf of the AU/ACP/LDC Alliance, as well as some other developing country ministers, reiterated their opposition to the launch on all four Singapore issues. The EU stated that while they could agree to unbundling the Singapore issues, to the extent that they were willing to drop investment, competition, and transparency in government in exchange for immediate negotiations on trade facilitation, there must first be results in other issues. Korea and Japan, on the other hand, stated that they could not agree to the dropping of any Singapore issue from the WTO’s agenda. At this juncture, Minister Derbez stated that consensus could not be reached on Singapore issues, and concluded that without such consensus, there could not be consensus on any of the other issues – i.e. agriculture, NAMA, trade and environment, implementation, special and differential treatment, cotton – that still remained on the Conference’s agenda to be discussed. He then decided to close the “green room” meeting and to also close the Conference without any agreement in the form of an agreed-upon Ministerial Declaration. From reports, many ministers (such as Lamy) were surprised at Minister Derbez’ decision. Brazil minister Celso Amorim even requested that Singapore issues be set aside for the moment and that the meeting go on instead to discuss the agriculture text. Minister Derbez, however, stood by his decision. The “green room” meeting adjourned at about 2.30 pm, 14 September.</p> <p>The sixth meeting of the informal HOD was finally convened at around 4 pm so that Minister Derbez could informally report to the other heads of delegation the results of the “green room” process and informally present a six-paragraph Ministerial Statement that he had prepared to be submitted to the formal plenary of the Conference for adoption. Shortly thereafter, at around 5.30 pm, the formal closing plenary session of the Conference was convened. The 6-paragraph Ministerial Statement prepared by Minister Derbez was formally approved by the Conference in plenary session at around 6 pm. It instructed Members’ 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.” It also called for the convening of a General Council meeting at senior officials’ level no later than 15 December 2003 to take any further necessary action “to move towards a successful and timely conclusion of the negotiations.” No decisions were taken by the Ministerial Conference with respect to any of the issues that had been put before it at the start. Even Hong Kong’s offer to host the next session of the Ministerial Conference was not discussed and agreed upon.</p> <p>News of the failure of ministers to agree on a Ministerial Declaration was met with great enthusiasm among many NGOs (except those from the business community) outside the meeting rooms. In particular, the solidarity among developing countries in pushing for their own agenda – e.g. with respect to agriculture and Singapore issues – was hailed as a landmark political event in the WTO’s political dynamics. Reactions of ministers were, predictably, more</p>
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circumspect. The G-21 said that their unity in Cancun showed that their group – led by Brazil, China, India, and South Africa – would now be a major player in the WTO’s agriculture negotiations, and expressed their belief that the negotiations will continue. Ministers from the AU/ACP/LDC Group stated that they regretted the focus on Singapore issues, despite continuously expressed opposition to negotiations on such issues shown by the majority of the WTO membership, ultimately diverted attention away from the priority issues that the Conference was supposed to deal with – i.e. agriculture, NAMA, special and differential treatment, cotton. The EU, through Pascal Lamy, said that the WTO has shown that it was a “medieval” institution in view of the fact that its rules and procedures are no longer sufficient to enable the WTO’s Members to conduct and steer discussions towards consensus. The EU, however, also stressed their proposals and positions, e.g. on agriculture and Singapore issues, will remain on the table. The US, through Robert Zoellick, blamed developing countries whom, he said, were engaged more in “technical ... inflammatory rhetoric” than in actual negotiations. In addition, Zoellick stressed that in the absence of positive movement, from the US perspective, in the WTO negotiations, the US would aggressively pursue negotiations on bilateral and regional trade agreements (such as the FTAA).

The Conference formally closed at 6 pm, 14 September 2003.

Sources:

- WTO Secretariat, Summary Reports of the Cancun Ministerial Conference 10-14 September 2003, at [www.wto.org](http://www.wto.org)
- Third World Network, TWN Report from Cancun Nos. 1 to 4, 9-14 September 2003
- ICTSD, Bridges Daily Update on the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference Issue Nos. 1-6, 10-15 September 2003, at [www.ictsd.org](http://www.ictsd.org)
- Personal notes of the South Centre delegation to the 5<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference
- Informal conversations with participants and delegates at the 5<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference and in Geneva post-Cancun



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