

Foreword

In the eyes of the world, the Cancún Trade Ministerial Meeting will act as a litmus test of the major industrial countries' commitment to inclusive globalisation, to meeting the Millennium Development Goals and to a stable and peaceful world. Increased trade opportunities provide the best means of placing poor countries on a higher trajectory of growth and poverty reduction. The current system does not work for many developing countries and imposes burdens on the consumers of the developed world.

The launching of the Doha Round gave a boost to the multilateral trading system. The lessons from Seattle and the perspective that emerged after 9/11 led to the recognition of the need for a new approach. It is a matter of considerable concern that progress in the Doha Development Round negotiations has been disappointing, particularly on the issues that matter most to developing countries. A number of important deadlines have been missed.

It is now important that Cancún delivers on the promises built into the Doha development agenda. Key areas where decisions at Cancún are essential are: agriculture, TRIPS and health; non-agricultural market access; special and differential treatment and implementation issues; review of the dispute settlement understanding; and the Singapore issues. It is important to make progress on non-agricultural market access to enable poor and vulnerable countries to enhance the resilience of their economies through diversification. They must be provided with a better framework to reduce the risks associated with their economies, if they are to cope effectively with globalisation.

Many developing countries are having to cope with multiple trade negotiations: the Doha Development Round; the ACP-EU negotiations on economic partnership agreements; and, in some cases, regional free trade agreements. Furthermore, some countries are still striving to implement the Uruguay Round Agreements. In such a context, it is necessary to consider carefully the capacity of the vast majority of developing countries to embark on the 'Singapore Issues': competition policy, investment, trade facilitation and transparency in government procurement.

The international community cannot allow Cancún to be a failure. It would set back global economic recovery and strengthen the hands of those who seek to exploit the increasing disparities in the world.

In the lead-up to the Cancún meeting, the Commonwealth Secretariat organised a series of regional workshops on developments in the Doha Development Round. This publication is a compilation of papers used at those meetings. It is intended primarily to assist policy-makers in Commonwealth developing countries, particularly small states and the least developed countries, in preparing their negotiating positions for Cancún.

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