

Assessment of the Doha Round following the WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong

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Commissioner Fischer-Boel informed the Council on the latest state of play of the negotiations at the WTO. She insisted on the following issues:

- the European Communities must remain united on the WTO negotiations;
- bilateral meetings had been held in Geneva since the beginning of the year with certain WTO partners in order to seek for common ground on sensitive products and to build up alliances;
- the offensive interests of the Community in Agriculture remain domestic supports and export refunds; she agreed with the Netherlands delegation to discuss the phasing out of the export refunds on their overall budgetary value rather than on their volume;
- the Commission will not table any new offer on agriculture following the last offer issued on 28 October 2005; she made clear in reference to remarks raised by the French delegation, that this offer was within the mandate granted by the Council to the Commission for the negotiations at the WTO, and that Geographical Indications were still being discussed; in response to a question raised by the Polish delegation, she also stated that the special safeguard clause was not to be given up;
- the importance of pursuing non-trade concerns, including those on Geographical Indications;
- despite a complicated schedule, the principle remained that "nothing could be agreed until everything is agreed";
- the Commissioner undertook to keep the Council fully informed of the state of play on WTO negotiations and to report to the next Council meeting on 20th March in the light of the planned G6 Ministerial meeting to be held in London in the beginning of March.

The Presidency repeated its intention to keep this issue on the agenda of forthcoming Council meetings.