

INTERNATIONAL TEXTILES AND CLOTHING BUREAU

Council of Representatives
46th Session
Goa, India
10-13 November 2008

Goa Communiqué

The ITCB Council of Representatives, meeting at its 46th session from 10 -13 November 2008 in Goa, India, discussed issues and prospects related to trade in textiles and clothing, including the current state of trade in the sector; the future role and functions of the ITCB; textile-related market access issues under the Doha Development Agenda (DDA); certain non-tariff issues confronting members' exports; and Aid-for-Trade in the context of textiles and clothing.

The Council expressed appreciation for the presence of and valuable contributions on the current state of trade in the sector from the representatives of various business associations – the European Foreign Trade Association; the China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Textiles; the China National Textile and Apparel Council; the Confederation of Indian Textile Industry; the Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council of India; the Synthetic and Rayon Textile Export Promotion Council of India; the Korea Federation of Textile Industries; the Korea Textile Trade Association; and the Vietnam Textile and Apparel Association. The Council also thanked the representative from Jordan for offering its views from a non-member's perspective.

The Council discussed the report of the Task Force established in February 2008 to examine the future role and functions of the ITCB and to make recommendations for the Council's consideration. It expressed gratitude for the dedication and commitment of the Chairman and members of the Task Force. It adopted the recommendations of the Task Force including that, while the ITCB should remain an intergovernmental organisation and continue to function in accordance with its charter, a Private Sector Consultative Committee should be established to advise the Council on matters of interest to the private sector. It further decided to launch a three-pronged action plan designed to strengthen the ITCB as a source of information and services for members as well as their private sectors. It expressed confidence in the ITCB's ability to serve the private sector in a more comprehensive manner in the future.

The Council reviewed the state of market access negotiations pertinent to trade in textiles and clothing under the DDA. It urged that progress be made in negotiations with respect to addressing high tariffs, tariff peaks and tariff escalation in the sector. It noted the need for a balanced resolution to address the challenges facing preference-receiving members, disproportionately-affected members and MFN-supplying members as a consequence of tariff liberalisation in textiles and clothing on an MFN basis. The Council expressed the hope that the negotiation on non-agricultural market access (NAMA) would result in a fair and balanced outcome

to enhance the market access opportunities for developing countries in the sector and called on developed countries to show leadership in this respect. The Council further noted that the modalities to be adopted should deliver on the development dimension of the DDA and recalled that special and differential treatment for developing countries should be an integral part of NAMA negotiations.

The Council expressed its concern on the issue of non-tariff barriers. It discussed the proposal by certain WTO Members for an agreement on labelling of textiles and clothing products and came to the view that further clarification was required of the perceived problem giving rise to this proposal. It was necessary to monitor closely and remain vigilant in respect of attempts to impose any new trade-restrictive measures.

The Council reviewed the state of discussions on Aid-for-Trade and agreed to discuss further the possibility of prioritising the allocation of Aid-for-Trade resources in favour of the textiles and clothing sector to assist developing countries to take advantage of new market access opportunities and to meet the challenges of adjustment upon the conclusion of the DDA.

The Council expressed its concern over the financial and economic turmoil and its potential negative impact on the textiles and clothing sector. It urged those major developed economies, which had long restrained imports from developing countries in the sector, to reject protectionist pressures and help strengthen confidence in the multilateral trading system. It asked the Secretariat to continue to monitor closely pertinent developments related to trade in the sector and to report on a regular basis.

The Council reiterated its resolve to continue and strengthen coordination among its members and to deepen its dialogue with other textile and clothing developing economy exporters having a shared interest in trade in the sector. In this regard, it emphasised the importance of constructive actions aimed at strengthening the positive efforts at liberalisation in the sector to further the development needs of its members. It also stressed the importance of developing countries exercising restraint from taking trade-restrictive measures amongst themselves in the textiles and clothing sector.

The Council expressed profound gratitude to the Government of India for hosting the meeting and for its generous hospitality. His Excellency, Mr. A.K. Singh, Secretary, Ministry for Textiles of India inaugurated the session. Mr. Martin Glass, Chairman of the ITCB and Permanent Representative of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China to the WTO, chaired the session while Dr. J.N. Singh, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Textiles of India, served as its Vice-Chairman.