

Secretariat should feed into the policy debate and, by the same token, open up channels for participation by outside experts in an intellectual capacity. Some ideas have been advanced as to how this might be done and what it would mean for the WTO.<sup>28</sup>

### *The case for improved consultations*

Finally, governments, international institutions and non-governmental experts must not carry on trade policy discussions over the heads of the general population. More and more effort will have to be directed to building a consensus on issues affecting individuals directly, both in developed and in developing countries. In the national context, in Canada for example, public notices through the *Canada Gazette*, legislative hearings, ongoing private sector consultations or multi-stakeholder consultations, a more current, complete, user-friendly website as well as polling all can be used to help develop a consensus around national trade policy interests and objectives.

This consensus building can also be done in the WTO context, for example, by holding more high-level meetings on specific difficult issues, as was done in March 1999; wider distribution of documents will also help. However, the key issue revolves around a more direct involvement of CSOs in the work of the WTO.

In this regard, attention has centred on the acceptance by WTO panels and the Appellate Body of *amicus curiae* ("friends of the

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<sup>28</sup> For example, Sylvia Ostry has proposed restoring to the WTO a body for policy discussion, which it has gone without since the suspension in 1990 of the Consultative Group of Eighteen (CG18): "In the terminology of the international regime literature the policy forum could become a broad meta-regime founded on mutually agreed basic principles and fostered by a combination of strategic assets: a knowledge infrastructure in the form of a research capability; a meeting infrastructure for knowledge diffusion, debate, peer group pressure; strategic planning and monitoring of policy performance." See S. Ostry, "WTO: Institutional Design for Better Governance," *op. cit.*