

### *A Round or an Agenda?*

The first controversy that emerged after trade ministers declared success at Doha centred on whether: (a) a round had been launched (in the customary meaning of these words); (b) the decision represented a “rolling launch” with the real decisions having been put off until the fifth Ministerial Meeting to be held in Mexico late in 2003; or (c) what had been agreed to was better characterized as an agenda—which in large part would be a “development agenda”.

The fact that all of these perspectives could legitimately be put forward was eloquent testimony to the subtlety of the drafting of the final communiqué. At the same time, the need for subtlety reflected the persistence of divisions on substantive and procedural matters between the WTO members present at the Doha meetings.

### *The Embedded Development Agenda*

With developing countries constituting the vast majority of the WTO’s 142 members at the time of the Doha meetings, with the major source for remaining gains from trade liberalization being in developing countries, and with developing countries as a group being least committed to proceeding with a new round at any cost, it was inevitable that development issues would be featured prominently in the Doha Declaration.

Many (but not all) developing countries remained convinced that the Uruguay Round had been a one-sided deal, involving commitments for major structural reforms on their part in return for market access that had not been forthcoming,<sup>2</sup> and that they were not enjoying the benefits from freer trade that had been predicted. At the same time, while many developing countries may have signed onto the agreement at Marrakech that

---

<sup>2</sup> As was pointed out, the timetable for implementation of the WTO’s intellectual property rights regime was linked to the phasing out of the quotas on textiles and clothing, reflecting the nature of the trade-offs that had been struck in concluding the Uruguay Round.