

Meanwhile, domestic consultations continue to help define Canadian priorities in this area, and an extensive assessment is being carried out to identify the barriers to investment that face Canadian firms in foreign markets as well as the gaps in current WTO rules for addressing these barriers.

The Committee's recommendation with respect to competition policy endorses the approach taken by the Government. In addition to the work undertaken by the WTO Working Group on the Interaction Between Trade and Competition Policy, trade and competition officials are working at the OECD on a set of international competition principles. Building on this, and taking into account the support expressed for this approach in our public consultations, Canada supports the establishment of a negotiating group at the Seattle Conference to develop core elements of a multilateral agreement on competition policy, on the understanding that such an agreement would not prejudice the independence of competition authorities.

A WTO framework agreement would require countries to adopt a sound competition law, with appropriate scope and independence in investigation and adjudication. It would also require a commitment to the principles of transparency, non-discrimination, and procedural fairness. Such a framework agreement would facilitate access to effective deterrents and provide an advocacy role for the competition authority while protecting confidential information. It would also provide common approaches to address specific anti-competitive conduct (such as cartels, abuse of dominance, and anti-competitive mergers), as well as provide mechanisms to facilitate co-operation between competition authorities.

The application of binding dispute settlement to competition cases is complex and controversial. Substantial analysis is required to determine how it would work in practice and what impact it would have on law enforcement activity. Certainly, dispute settlement procedures cannot review decisions of competition authorities in individual cases.

The establishment of support mechanisms will be critical to the