

support, and market access)—although a possible compromise shaping up for Day 5 of the conference was unfortunately never discussed due to the early halt of talks. These problems were compounded by a weak text on the flaring cotton subsidies issue, frustration over the continuing lack of progress on implementation issues, and uncertainty as to the flexibility that would be provided in the non-agricultural market access negotiations.

A prominent feature of the dynamics that shaped the outcome at Cancún was the interplay amongst the various blocs within the WTO membership. The US-EU bloc, which had traditionally driven multilateral deals, was confronted with a powerful new group of dynamic trading countries in the form of the G-20⁴ and the assertive new alliance of largely poorer countries, the G-90.

No better indication of the power of new players and their alliances can be seen than the composition of the informal group called by Minister Derbez at Cancún early on the Sunday morning of the Conference. This initial meeting included the US, EU, China, Brazil, India, Malaysia, and Kenya. This group failed, however, to bridge significant gaps on a range of issues and a larger group was convened later on Sunday morning of about thirty countries including representatives of regional groups. The group discussed the Singapore issues for several hours without showing any signs of convergence. At this point, Minister Derbez determined that it would not be possible to develop consensus across the agenda, and chose to move to an early closure of the meeting.

However, no one issue can fully explain the failure to reach a Ministerial Text, nor was any one Member or alliance responsible for blocking progress. In the post mortems, the breakdown

⁴ This group actually included a fluctuating number of the following WTO Members during the Cancún conference: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Egypt, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, South Africa, Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe. Post-Cancún US pressure has been brought to bear on several members, causing 'defections' from the Group including El Salvador, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala; Thailand and the Philippines also came under pressure to distance themselves from the Group. Guatemala announced on 22 August 2004 its decision to rejoin the group (see: "Guatemala Volvería al G-20", *Prensa Libre*, Guatemala, Domingo 22 de agosto del 2004).