

months later is that the economic context and the stage of incubation of trade issues (including establishment of the intellectual basis for next steps) were not of themselves sufficient to launch the Round or to ensure forward movement of the negotiations once launched. By further setting a tight deadline for results, and adding a complex development dimension to the remit, Ministers implicitly set forth a very difficult set of challenges to negotiators, both in terms of preparing the agenda for the mid-term Fifth Ministerial of the World Trade Organization (WTO) at Cancun, Mexico, September 2003, and for completion of the Round in time to permit the implementation of the results by January 1st, 2005. How are the negotiators coping in these circumstances, what are reasonable expectations for the Round taking into account both the issues involved and the context, and what additional research might be undertaken to help provide the information base required to forge a consensus?

The state of preparedness for Cancun

Overall, some fifteen months into the process since the launch at Doha and with six months to go to the Ministerial at Cancun where the Round reaches the planned halfway mark, there is a general sense that, all things considered, the Round has evolved rather quickly. Good progress has been made in setting up the infrastructure for negotiations and clarifying the approach, in the process of tabling offers and requests, and so forth. Several negotiating groups have missed deadlines,¹ with slippage in the

¹ Editors' note: The Council on TRIPs was unable to meet the end-2002 deadline under paragraph 6 of the Doha Declaration on TRIPs and Public Health to find a solution to the problems countries face in making use of compulsory licensing (i.e., allowing the use of a patent without the consent of the patent-holder) if they lack appropriate manufacturing capacity. The Chair's draft proposal of December 12th, 2002 failed to forge a consensus.

Meanwhile, the Special Session of the Committee on Trade and Development missed three deadlines (July 31st and December 31st 2002, and February 10th 2003) to provide recommendations to the General Council on Special and Differential Treatment (SDT). The some 155 SDT provisions in the WTO Agreements provide more favourable treatment and greater flexibility of timetables in meeting obligations. The impasse is over the