

From Cancún to Geneva: Were the Optimists or Pessimists right?

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On December 11-12, 2003, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (now re-named Foreign Affairs Canada and International Trade Canada) convened an informal roundtable of leading observers of international trade and investment for a discussion of the prospects for the Doha Development Agenda in light of the developments at the Fifth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization at Cancún, Mexico, in September 2003. The objective of the roundtable was to obtain views on the prospects for the Doha Round, taking into account both the negotiating agenda and the geopolitical and international macroeconomic context, to discuss emerging issues that might affect the direction of the negotiations, and to identify areas where analytic work might facilitate further progress. Against the background of the collapse of negotiations at Cancún, this note provides a thematic summary of the discussions; a postscript compares and contrasts the expectations of trade policy specialists post-Cancún and the actual outcome at Geneva at the end of July 2004. As the roundtable was held under Chatham House rules, no attribution is given; responsibility for the interpretation of the discussion rests entirely with the authors.

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