

actually signing onto the obligations because they are not ready (e.g., Brazil has adopted the bulk of the telecom reference paper but not signed). A multiple speed WTO is a question that can be—and indeed was—raised.

An assessment of the Geneva scene post-Cancún suggested a subdued environment with all negotiating parties sitting in defensive mode and no interest at all in some of the negotiating groups. While one could see some elements that might drive negotiations (e.g., by one characterisation Brazil would engage if the EU/US move on agriculture; India has to move on industrial tariffs, and there is systemic value in the Singapore issues), some 50-70 countries were described as having minimal interest in the systemic issues and essentially nothing at stake other than the erosion of preferences and so they are questioning changes to the status quo.

In at least the one view, there is a danger here: the hiatus in the negotiations might not be used as a breathing space to develop a sharper agenda; rather it might well be used to harden the existing defensive positions.

The new structure and dynamics of alliances

If the answer to the Cancún collapse is to “repackage, rename, rebrand”, there were also answers to be sought concerning what was described as the “deafening silence” on leadership. Which brings us to perhaps the most striking feature of the Cancún Conference, the new group dynamics and what these imply for the future of the negotiations.

As the fundamental transformation of the negotiating dynamics at Cancún showed, the most serious unintended consequence of the Uruguay Round—the north-south split—is becoming more complicated than at first thought. By one analysis, it is no longer just a simple north-south split but rather the emergence of 3 or perhaps 3 1/2 “blocs”: The one or one-and-a-half refers to the US-EU alliance, which might or might not be functioning as a bloc; the G-20, featuring Brazil, China, India and South Africa, which emerged as a counterpoint to the trans-Atlantic bloc; and the G-90 supported by various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which might not be clear