

The immediate task in reaching a successful conclusion to the negotiations is to secure a substantial market access package which expands trading opportunities for all participants.

Continuing differences over the elimination of all non-tariff barriers to trade and their replacement with tariff only regimes constitute the single most important impediment to the task of completing the market access package in agriculture within the timeframe adopted by all participating countries. This issue therefore must be resolved -- and quickly -- in a manner which ensures that there are no exceptions and a correct implementation of comprehensive tariffication.

(Canada, however, remains of the view that import measures consistent with the disciplines of a clarified and strengthened Article XI should not be subject to tariffication provided they are accompanied by meaningful access commitments fully in conformity with the trade liberalisation objectives of the Round.)

The agriculture package must provide improved access for all products in all markets. Offers and outcomes that have the effect of simply maintaining highly restrictive access arrangements or which reduce current access to markets for particular products are clearly not acceptable.

The Draft Final Act remains the basis for concluding the negotiations. The Cairns Group is not party to the Blair House accord, containing proposals which would dilute the Draft Final Act. The Group can only take a final position on the Blair House accord in appropriate multilateral negotiations when it has been tabled and all of the market access outcomes are known and can thus be evaluated. Notwithstanding this, it is with alarm that we note the further efforts to weaken the Draft Final Act disciplines on agriculture. Clearly such efforts seriously jeopardize an overall acceptable outcome on agriculture.

Cairns Group Ministers will closely follow developments in the negotiations over the ensuing weeks. Where other countries are taking positive action to end the Round we will support and cooperate with them. Now is the time for the biggest possible coalition for success to be formed.

The world has waited too long and economic growth and employment have suffered because of delays in the Round. Now is not the time for special pleading, diversions and delaying tactics. It is a time for positive, constructive action to achieve economic growth.