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## Summit leaders endorse ministerial Gatt meeting

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INDUSTRIAL leaders at the Venice summit gave a discreet but firm push to the Uruguay round of multilateral trade liberalisation talks by endorsing the concept of a ministerial meeting in the course of the negotiations, according to trade diplomats in Geneva.

"We consider that it would be useful to have, as appropriate, in the course of the negotiations, a meeting of the trade negotiating committee at the ministerial level," the leaders said in their communique published at the end of the Venice summit.

Diplomats said this has increased the likelihood of a full-scale ministerial meeting in the second half of next year to review progress in the four-year Uruguay round.

Such a meeting, which has long been under consideration at the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade in Geneva, would provide impetus for

negotiators to come up with some concrete proposals. The Gull talks were launched at Punta del Este, Uruguay, in September last year.

The idea is in line with other sections of the communique which suggest that agreements reached on a provisional or definitive basis could be implemented prior to the formal conclusion of the negotiations.

The communique endorsed the recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development call for world agricultural reform, but left in qualifications referring, for example, to concerns such as food security and employment.

The US said before the summit it would seek a clear statement of support from heads of state for agricultural reform, while some other countries, notably France, Germany and Japan had not wanted to go further than the OECD ministerial agreement.