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agree on a framework text in Cancun, which would then guide the work of the agriculture negotiators in developing modalities in the months following Cancun.

During the Cancun Ministerial, WTO members discussed the elements of a draft agriculture framework text, and George Yeo, Trade Minister for Singapore and facilitator of the agriculture discussions at Cancun, developed a new draft framework. This was included in the overall draft Ministerial Declaration tabled by the Chairman of the Ministerial Conference, Mexican Foreign Relations Minister Ernesto Derbez, on September 13, 2003.

However, the Cancun Ministerial ended before ministers had the opportunity to engage in detailed discussions of the consolidated Derbez draft text. Nevertheless, ministers agreed that the valuable work up to and at the Cancun Ministerial Conference would be brought forward into the next phase of the negotiations. They undertook that, in areas where they had reached a high level of convergence, they would maintain this convergence while working toward an overall acceptable result.

Ambassador del Castillo conducted informal consultations at the head-of-delegation level in Geneva from October to December on agriculture, non-agricultural market access, the Singapore Issues and cotton. While his consultations revealed no new flexibility, he identified key issues for continuing work in each of the four areas. Early 2004 was taken up with the selection of a slate of chairs for WTO regular and negotiating bodies, and the agriculture negotiating sessions resumed under the chairmanship of Tim Groser, New Zealand's Ambassador to the WTO.

The key agriculture issues dividing members remain similar to those at Cancun. Canada and most other members want the negotiations to result in a certain date for the elimination of all export subsidies on agricultural products. The approach to market access, and whether it should be the same for developed and developing countries, remains a critical issue. A key issue will be how to achieve an ambitious market access result while providing some flexibility in how to improve market access for sensitive products. Canada has suggested some ways forward in this regard. Finally, while it has been generally agreed that

those with the highest levels of distorting domestic support should reduce the most, this principle must apply to all forms of trade-distorting domestic support.

Canada remains well positioned to pursue the objectives it set out when the negotiations began. The Government of Canada will continue to consult a broad spectrum of Canadians and the provinces over the course of the agriculture negotiations. The government will also continue to inform Canadians on developments in the negotiations through the Web sites of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

## **TECHNICAL BARRIERS TO TRADE**

Canada's objective is to ensure that regulatory measures and standards relating to goods serve legitimate objectives, do not unnecessarily restrict access for exports of Canadian products and do not represent unnecessary obstacles to trade. Such measures include mandatory technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures, as well as voluntary standards.

The WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) defines the rights and obligations of WTO members with respect to the development and application of technical measures that affect trade in goods. The Agreement is based on the principle that countries have the right to adopt and apply mandatory technical measures in order to achieve a legitimate objective, provided the measures do not discriminate against imported goods and do not restrict international trade more than is necessary. TBT-related measures are subject to WTO dispute settlement provisions. Canada has well-established procedures for coordinating domestic compliance with the Agreement and for implementing the Agreement to improve market access for Canadian exports.

Canada promotes wide acceptance of, and adherence to, the WTO TBT Agreement and its Annex 3 (Code of Good Practice for the Preparation, Adoption and Application of Standards). Canada also participates in the activities of many international standards bodies, including the International Organization for Standardization.