stituencies in the industrialized world such as the pharmaceuticals that had pushed for the Uruguay Round). Nor did it help that the first concrete steps on agriculture after Doha had been backward—the European Union's extension of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in 2003 and the US Farm Bill of 2002 which expanded US agricultural support quite substantially.

Given the scale of the challenges, it is at least arguable that the Round progressed, all in all, rather well through its first four years—and indeed not out of line with what in retrospect would have been reasonable expectations. Consistent with this expressed optimistic view, the hard slogging in Geneva and various Ministerial meetings (plenary and mini) might well have served to bring expectations into line with a feasible outcome, finally allowing the Round to enter what one observer termed an "Age of Realism" in which the final moves toward agreement might be quickly and decisively taken.

Or not. Contemporary assessment of major events is hampered by the stubborn indeterminacy of the future—which in small part at least reflects the fact that contemporary assessment is itself part of the analytical feedback that plays into ultimate outcomes.

The following is a synthesis of the thoughts and views of close observers of the trade scene as regards the state of the multilateral trade negotiations and more generally of the global trade scene, as they were put forward and discussed in Ottawa shortly following the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) at Hong Kong, China, December 2005.

Is the Round still "doable"?

At the roundtable, it was argued that the outcome of the Doha Round negotiation turns on several inter-related questions:

- whether there is a persuasive commercial case for the round;
- whether a deal can be configured that meets the commercial objectives, with a reasonable balance of negotiating gains and concessions for all Members, and that is at the same time politically feasible; and