

News Release

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HOCKIN RELEASES CAIRNS GROUP COMMUNIQUÉ

The attached Cairns Group Communiqué from Geneva was made available today in Canada by the office of the Honourable Tom Hockin, Minister for International Trade.

Former Agriculture Minister Bill McKnight represented Canada at the Cairns Group meeting in Geneva on October 17 and 18 on behalf of Mr. Hockin.

- 30 -

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13TH MINISTERIAL MEETING

CAIRNS GROUP

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

17 - 18 OCTOBER 1993

CAIRNS GROUP

ARGENTINA
AUSTRALIA
BRAZIL
CANADA
CHILE
COLOMBIA
FIJI
HUNGARY
INDONESIA
MALAYSIA
NEW ZEALAND
PHILIPPINES
THAILAND
URUGUAY

CAIRNS GROUP COMMUNIQUE

18 OCTOBER 1993

The Uruguay Round has only 58 days to run. The date of 15 December is a real deadline. It cannot be extended. The remaining two months must be used to ensure that the Round succeeds.

All participants in the negotiations have a responsibility to ensure that the task succeeds. The Cairns Group fully supports the efforts of GATT Director General Peter Sutherland and commits itself as always to work positively and constructively within this urgent timeframe to achieve a genuinely trade liberalising outcome.

Ironically at this critical stage, some of those who have most to gain -- amongst the larger industrial countries -- appear to be the most reluctant to make the final effort required to positively conclude the Round. Narrow interest groups in these countries must not be allowed to frustrate the successful conclusion of the negotiations.

It remains as clear now as it has been since the Punta del Este Declaration of 1986 that the major industrial countries bear the prime responsibility for showing the necessary leadership and flexibility to bring the Uruguay Round to a successful conclusion.

The Uruguay Round will bring major benefits to the world economy. Failure will entail great economic and political costs. This is the right time to move forward and speedily resolve the outstanding issues.

The Round must be concluded on the basis of a multilaterally agreed, balanced global package. The Cairns Group rejects, as it has done since 1986, the notion that agriculture could be set aside in order to conclude interim or partial agreements.

The negotiations on agriculture cannot be completed without the full involvement of the Cairns Group and all the other parties concerned. As major stakeholders in world agricultural trade the Group insists that agriculture is not simply a trans-Atlantic affair.

Successful completion of the task in agriculture will require the negotiation of commitments which expand market access. It will also require rapid and final acceptance of all the Draft Final Act provisions to liberalise agriculture trade. These include quantity and budgetary based reductions in export subsidies and the commitments on trade-distorting domestic support measures.

The Cairns Group endorses the negotiated agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures. It forms a substantial part of the package and should not be re-opened.

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.