

Minister for
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TRADE MINISTERS FROM 12 ASIA NATIONS TO MEET
IN VANCOUVER TO SEEK PROGRESS IN MULTILATERAL
TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

International Trade Minister John C. Crosbie will be chairman of an international meeting of ministers responsible for the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations (MTN) in Vancouver, Sept. 10-12. The ministers represent the 12 member-nations of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation group (APEC). The purpose of the meeting is to seek solutions to the obstacles standing in the way of a large, successful conclusion to the Round in December.

"When APEC met for the first time in Canberra, last year, I challenged my colleagues to work actively with me to achieve a successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round, our top priority for the international economic agenda in 1990," Mr. Crosbie said.

Acting on a proposal made by Mr. Crosbie, MTN negotiators from APEC countries have been meeting regularly in Geneva, while two ministerial-level conferences on the MTN have been scheduled, beginning with the Vancouver meeting.

"APEC countries, individually and as a group, have a unique opportunity, at this critical juncture of the Uruguay Round, to provide leadership in bringing the complex negotiations to a comprehensive, balanced outcome. We should show, through our deliberations in Vancouver, our determination to achieve a successful conclusion of the negotiations at the time of the final ministerial meeting in December," Mr. Crosbie said.

The APEC countries are Canada, Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, the United States and the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), comprising Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Rapid economic growth in this area in past decades has been fuelled by trade, and the group is committed to laying the foundation for a renewed multilateral trading system which will open markets and improve the rules of trade.

"The Uruguay Round is a global negotiation and a single, comprehensive undertaking," Mr. Crosbie said. "Although APEC participants alone will not be able to ensure its full success, each APEC country can and must take concrete steps to contribute to our common goal. With only 90 days to the conclusion of the negotiations, it is urgent that we seek consensus on how to deal with the critical issues that stand in the way of a successful conclusion to the Uruguay Round."

At the Vancouver meeting, Mr. Crosbie will urge the APEC ministers to intensify their efforts in the GATT negotiations in three key areas:

- obtaining substantial reductions in tariffs and non-tariff barriers, especially for agricultural and processed resource products, textiles and clothing, tropical products, and a range of high-technology items such as telecommunications;
- bringing all economies of the region under stronger and more predictable GATT rules and disciplines, thereby providing more predictable and balanced market access conditions.
- extending the scope of the existing rules of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade to include services, trade-related intellectual property and investment measures.

Mr. Crosbie pointed out that a successful, substantive MTN package will require an institutional framework to oversee and to administer the GATT system in respect of both goods and services. On that basis, he will seek APEC support for approval in principle for the establishment of a world trade organization, when ministers meet in Brussels in December for the concluding session of the Round.

"APEC countries, at our first meeting in Canberra last November, and again when we met in Singapore in July, have recognized the need for substantial reform of the world trading system. Over the past three years, our trade negotiators have made a great deal of progress in clarifying both the obstacles and the solutions to achieving a large result from this Round. The question now is finding the political will to act," Mr. Crosbie said.

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