



**35th Cairns Group Ministerial Meeting
Punta del Este, Uruguay
19-20 April 2010**

Communiqué

We, the Ministers of the Cairns Groupⁱ, have met in Punta del Este, Uruguay, from 19 to 20 April 2010. Following the stocktake by senior officials in Geneva last month, this has been our first opportunity to meet collectively to discuss the current state of the Doha Development Round and to chart a path forward.

Our discussions have been enriched by the attendance of special guests from Egypt, the European Union, Japan, Mexico and the United States.

In contrast to last year, our meeting in Punta del Este has been set against the background of a slowly recovering global economy. In a recent report, the World Trade Organization (WTO) forecasted that global trade will grow by 9.5% in 2010, following the sharpest decline in more than 70 years. Throughout the economic downturn, the WTO's rules based system has helped to contain protectionist responses and to maintain access to markets and levels of trade finance. Now, as the recovery gets underway, the WTO remains the right platform for trade to grow strongly once again.

These are positive signs, but we cannot be complacent. The recovery remains fragile and the pressure to introduce new protectionist policies still exists, including in agriculture through the use of tariffs, subsidies and restrictive non-tariff measures.

We must remember that trade plays a vital role in economic growth and development, job creation and poverty reduction, yet imposes only a minimal fiscal burden on governments. Trade is also fundamental in addressing food security, in supporting environmentally sustainable agricultural production and in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

This is why protectionism must be resisted and why efforts to strengthen the rules-based multilateral trading system must continue. Concluding the Doha Development Agenda must remain the top priority of WTO Members. The Cairns Group will continue to push vigorously for global trade reform in agriculture, which is critical to the development deliverables of the Round.

We note the slow pace of the negotiations since July 2008. While there has been some progress since last year's Cairns Group Ministerial Meetings in Bali (June 2009) and Geneva (November 2009) – notably the proposed modality on tropical products and preference erosion – conclusion of the Round is still not within our grasp.

We must ensure that the positive progress we have made in the agriculture negotiations over the past nine years is preserved. It is essential that the Round delivers on the reforms needed in agriculture, including the elimination of all forms of export subsidies by 2013, substantial reductions and disciplines on domestic support, and substantial improvements in market access. There can be no weakening of ambition on these issues. Development is central to this Round and the outcome should accurately reflect this development mandate.

The Cairns Group remains determined to reach an ambitious and balanced outcome in the agriculture negotiations, in line with the agreed mandate. To achieve that goal, we will continue our efforts, at both the technical and political level, to resolve the outstanding issues so that the Round can be concluded as soon as possible.

We are pleased that our meeting in Bali last year acted as a catalyst for renewed ministerial engagement on the Round. It presented us with an important opportunity to engage with India, the US and other special guests, and created momentum for ongoing political discussion, including at the New Delhi meeting in September. It contributed to an awareness that, in our search for progress, negotiations could usefully take place in a range of formats as we look for a final deal.

Our meeting here in Punta del Este has reinforced the need for a proactive approach to the negotiating process. Maintaining the primacy of the multilateral process in Geneva is critical, and negotiations in other formats and configurations should support this process. It is also important that we continue our work in each of the negotiating groups, and work horizontally across the negotiating agenda to help make the necessary links and balances between all parts of the Doha Mandate.

We urge all WTO Members to continue engaging at the ministerial level to provide the political guidance needed to bring the Doha negotiations to a successful conclusion. This includes taking advantage of all opportunities for ministerial engagement, such as the forthcoming APEC and OECD meetings.

Japan and the United States, who have been special guests at this meeting, have told us they share the views of the Cairns Group on the importance of moving forward in the Doha negotiations, including the need to work proactively to bridge technical and political gaps and to consider links across all parts of the Doha agenda. We have greatly appreciated the opportunity to engage with our special guests on these issues.

We welcome the presence and acknowledge the input of WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy.

We also welcome Vietnam, who participated in our meeting as an observer, and look forward to continuing our close cooperation.

We have again appreciated the presence of the Cairns Group Farm Leaders. The interests of our agricultural producers are paramount in the WTO agriculture negotiations, and we have continued to benefit from their ongoing guidance and support.

Finally, we express our deepest gratitude to the Uruguayan Government for hosting the 35th Cairns Group Ministerial Meeting and welcome the offer by Canada to host the next Ministerial Meeting of the Group.

The Cairns Group comprises Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, South Africa, Thailand and Uruguay.

ⁱ Costa Rica, Malaysia, Pakistan, South Africa and Thailand were unable to attend due to disruptions to air travel following the Icelandic volcano eruption.