

[Previous issues](#)[Contact us](#)[n](#)

[DOHA DEVELOPMENT AGENDA](#) [back to top](#)

[Lamy: "We can stay on track to successfully conclude the Round next year"](#)



Director-General Pascal Lamy reported to the General Council on 14 December that "an increasing level of engagement" is starting to appear in consultations by the Chairs of the negotiating groups. He stressed the "need to maintain the rhythm of the informal work ... to exploit the window of opportunity in the first quarter of next year".

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In an online chat on 18 December 2006, he said that "I am doing my best to push things as hard as possible and I am seeing some positive signs". However, he is "still waiting for some of the more important members to convert their expressions of increased flexibility into numbers". Mr. Lamy fielded more than 100 questions in English, French and Spanish from around the world.

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[General Council establishes transparency mechanism for regional trade agreements](#)

The General Council, on 14 December, established on a provisional basis a new transparency mechanism for all regional trade agreements (RTAs).

> [More](#)

> [Summary of the meeting](#)

WTO ACTIVITIES [back to top](#)**Provisional agreement on text of revised Government Procurement Agreement**

Government procurement negotiators reached an understanding on the revision of the text of the 1994 plurilateral Agreement on Government Procurement at a meeting of the Committee on Government Procurement on 8 December.

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Multimedia facility at WTO to enhance communication with public

The WTO has expanded its media relations, information and training activities with a new television studio at its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

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DEVELOPMENT [back to top](#)**Agencies agree plan for food safety, animal/plant health assistance**

Five international organizations, donors and representatives of beneficiary countries have approved, on 18 December, a new medium term strategy for their joint efforts to help developing countries implement internationally-agreed standards for food safety and animal and plant health.

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The European Communities awards EUR 500,000 to regional training courses for developing countries

The European Communities has donated EUR 500,000 to contribute to the Doha Development Agenda Global Trust Fund, which brings the EC's involvement up to EUR 1.2 million.

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38th WTO Trade Policy Course ends

Twenty-seven government officials from developing countries, least-developed countries and economies in transition concluded, on 8 December, a three-month immersion into the WTO.

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TRADE POLICY REVIEWS [back to top](#)**Hong Kong, China: Strong open economy in expansion, capable of facing challenges**

The Trade Policy Review Body, on 13 and 15 December, conducted the fifth review of the trade policies and practices of Hong Kong, China. The review was chaired by Amb. Claudia Uribe (Colombia). Amb. Mario Matus (Chile) acted as discussant.

The performance of the Hong Kong, China economy and its outlook have greatly improved since 2003, largely as a result of its continued openness to trade and foreign investment as well as a solid services sector, the driving force behind growth, according to a WTO Secretariat report on the trade policies and practices of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China (HKSAR).

The report notes inter alia the importance of recent developments in the enforcement of intellectual property rights protection, the prospects for a comprehensive competition law, rice trade liberalization and the positive impact of the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement with China, which has given an added stimulus to the HKSAR economy.

The report also stresses that competitiveness in Hong Kong, China will remain dependant on maintaining the traditional strengths in the economy and developing new sources of growth. Potential risks to its economic growth prospects might come inter alia from a steeper than expected rise in US interest rates and an outbreak of protectionist measures against China.

> [More](#)

ACCESSIONS [back to top](#)**Viet Nam to join WTO on 11 January 2007**

Viet Nam informed the WTO on 12 December that it has ratified its membership agreement. It will now become the WTO's 150th member on 11 January 2007.

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DISPUTE SETTLEMENT [back to top](#)**WTO issues compliance panel report on Argentina-Chile price band dispute**

The WTO, on 8 December, issued the report of the compliance panel in the case brought by Argentina regarding Chile: Price band system and safeguard measures relating to certain agricultural products (DS207).

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[NEW PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS](#) [back to top](#)[WTO's 2006 report highlights developing countries' growing role in world trade](#)

Developing countries are playing a growing role in the WTO, not only in the Doha negotiations but also in the Dispute Settlement process and in all facets of WTO activity, says Director General Pascal Lamy in his foreword to the report.

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