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Global Forest and Paper Industries Unite to Seek Free and Fair Trade

Canada NewsWire

July 8, 2003

Canada NewsWire | July 8, 2003

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Associations representing forest and paper industries in Canada, New Zealand, the United States, Australia and South Africa have united in an international industry effort to move rapidly towards the elimination of tariffs, non-tariff barriers, and putting in place more effective trade rules for forest and paper products through the World Trade Organisation (WTO) 'Doha' negotiations.

Representatives from the Canadian, New Zealand and U.S. industries were in Geneva this week to meet with WTO officials and missions to encourage support for accelerated trade liberalization in forest products which will expand employment and economic growth and contribute to the promotion of sustainable development.

This mission comes as WTO negotiators gather in Geneva for a further session in preparation for the meeting of trade ministers in Cancun in September on negotiating market access for non-agricultural products including wood, pulp and paper.

"In our meetings, we impressed upon trade officials that eliminating trade barriers in the forest products sector will serve to grow the industry as a whole. It will also result in economic growth in developing countries that are increasingly important producers and exporters of forest products," said Stephen Jacobi, CEO of the New Zealand Forest Industries Council. "We believe the WTO's Doha round offers the means to best achieve this goal."

In May, representatives from the group of forest and paper industries met in Oaxaca, Mexico to discuss progress in the WTO negotiations. Between them, the industries concerned represent 33 percent of world trade in wood products, 49 percent of world trade in pulp and 25 percent of world trade in paper.

"Our message here is clear: all forest producing countries will benefit from the elimination of trade barriers and the promotion of enhanced free and fair trade," said Avrim Lazar, President and CEO of the Forest Products Association of Canada. "Pursuing these shared objectives with our international partners is the best way to ensure the long-term health of the world forest products market."

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"We have common views to advance in the Doha negotiations", said Steve Lovett, of the American Forest & Paper Association. "These concern eliminating tariffs and non tariff barriers, and strengthening trade rules. We continue to advocate these to our respective governments and directly at the WTO in Geneva and Cancun."

The industries' common views are set out in the statement "Achieving free and fair trade in forest and paper products" which follows.

ACHIEVING FREE AND FAIR TRADE IN FOREST AND PAPER PRODUCTS A STATEMENT BY LEADING GLOBAL FOREST AND PAPER INDUSTRIES

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND JULY 2003

This statement expresses strong industry support for accelerated trade liberalisation in wood and paper products through the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Doha Development Agenda ("the Doha negotiations").

This statement reflects the views of forest and paper products industries in Canada, New Zealand and the United States as well as the forest industry in Australia and the paper industry in South Africa(1). Between them these industries represent 33 percent of world trade in wood products, 49 percent of world trade in wood pulp and 25 percent of world trade in paper.

Representatives of these industries met in Oaxaca, Mexico, in May 2003 to discuss the progress in the Doha negotiations and to consider options for furthering the interests of the global forest and paper industries in these critical negotiations.

These industry representatives are united in their belief that accelerated trade liberalisation of forest and paper products, particularly through the WTO, provides a means of expanding output, employment and economic growth and alleviating poverty. The Doha negotiations offer an unparalleled opportunity to eliminate trade barriers, put in place more effective trade rules and address the specific concerns of developing countries. A successful and robust outcome from the Doha negotiations is critical to ensuring the future expansion of the world's forest and paper industries.

Reviewing progress in the Doha negotiations, industry representatives agreed that:

- WTO members should move with the greatest possible speed towards the goal of eliminating all tariffs on forest and paper products, whether by an ambitious formula approach to tariff elimination, an expansion of current zero for zero deals, or a combination of these approaches, taking account of established WTO provisions in respect of developing countries;
- the goal of eliminating non tariff barriers should also be pursued with speed given their increasing prevalence and effect in blocking trade expansion;
- greater clarification, refinement and more disciplined application of anti-dumping provisions is required; and
- they will seek more effective rules and disciplines to address the use of subsidies.

Industry representatives called on their respective national governments and all member countries of the WTO to

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ensure:

- that effective modalities for non-agricultural market access were identified as soon as possible, but before the WTO Ministerial in Cancun, Mexico, in September 2003; and

- that Trade Ministers meeting in Cancun resolve to keep the Doha negotiation to its original timeframe for conclusion by 1 January 2005.

Industry representatives further agreed:

- to convey the views in this statement to their respective national governments and to industry stakeholders and the general public in their countries;

- to consult regularly amongst themselves with a view to co-ordinating their respective positions and strategy in respect to the Doha negotiations; and

- to explore opportunities to present these views and any subsequent considerations to WTO officials and national delegations in Geneva and as appropriate at the WTO Ministerial Meeting in Cancun, Mexico, in September 2003.

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