

E-Commerce

The declaration on global electronic commerce adopted by the Second (Geneva) Ministerial Conference on 20 May 1998 urged the WTO General Council to establish a comprehensive work programme to examine all trade-related issues arising from global electronic commerce. The General Council adopted the plan for this work programme on 25 September 1998, initiating discussions on issues of electronic commerce and trade by the Goods, Services and TRIPS (intellectual property) Councils and the Trade and Development Committee.

On paragraph 34 of the Doha Declaration, the ministers took note of the work which has been done in the General Council and other relevant bodies since the Ministerial Declaration of 20 May 1998 and agreed to continue the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce.

On paragraph 46 of the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration, the ministers noted that the examination of issues under the Work Programme is not yet complete, agreed to reinvigorate that work, and declared that Members will maintain their current practice of not imposing customs duties on electronic transmissions until the 7th Session (**Moratorium on import duties on electronic transmissions**).

During the current discussions, Cuba expressed its concerns of not reaching any progress on the work programme since November 2005, opposed the extension of the **Moratorium** to the 8th Ministerial Conference, and proposed a draft decision on E-commerce to be adopted during the 7th Ministerial Conference calling to intensively reinvigorate the discussions in order to complete the work program by the session of the General Council on July 2010, with the extension of the **Moratorium** till that date.

The Majority of the members see that there is a risk of not completing the work programme in six months; some of them suggested adopting a roadmap to complete it with reviewing the progress achieved every six months.

Recently, Cuba showed some flexibility and agreed on the extension of the **Moratorium until the next MC**, with a binding language in the Ministerial Decision to intensively reinvigorate the Work Program after the 7th MC.

The members reached a compromise on a draft decision which contains the extension of the moratorium to the next session, which the ministers have been decided to hold in 2011, with the reinvigoration of the work programme and periodic reviews on its progress to be made every 6 months by the General Council.