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Trade Policy Monitoring

Prime Minister Blair urges for progress in Hong Kong

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Report Highlights:

In a key note speech, UK Prime Minister Tony Blair has urged for progress in the Doha Development Round, personally committing to do "whatever it takes" prior to the meeting in Hong Kong to see that a meaningful agreement is reached.

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On Monday evening, November 14, 2005, UK Prime Minister (PM) Tony Blair used his annual speech to the City of London's Lord Mayor's Banquet to urge for progress in the current WTO talks. In a speech focusing on trade, PM Blair argued next month's trade talks in Hong Kong offered the world a chance to build on the progress made during the July 2005 Gleneagles G8 summit, specifically the UK's initiative to assist developing countries and the importance of trade to alleviate poverty. The Doha Development Round is an opportunity to 'tackle some of the most fundamental injustices at the heart of world trade', he said, including agriculture, non-agricultural market access, and services. He went on to link increased trade with reduced poverty and, subsequently, less conflict. The Hong Kong summit comes at the end of PM Blair's year-long presidency of the G8 and six-month presidency of the EU.

On the negotiations themselves, PM Blair said: "The European Union and the US must go further, within the negotiations, on agriculture. We must reduce trade distorting subsidies; we must see a credible end date for export subsidies; we must put an ambitious limit on the number of sensitive products that can be afforded extra protection....In return Brazil, India and others must move on cuts in industrial tariffs, services liberalization, with proper flexibility for developing countries that need to sequence their commitments in line with their development needs." Further, PM Blair committed himself to doing "whatever it takes" over the next few weeks leading up to Hong Kong to overcome the divisions among the World Trade Organisation's 148 members.

PM Blair's speech is available in full at:

<http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page8524.asp>