

**Negotiating Group on Rules**

**SUMMARY REPORT OF THE MEETING  
HELD ON 11 MARCH 2004**

Note by the Secretariat

1. The Negotiating Group on Rules ("the Group") held a formal meeting on 11 March 2004.
2. The Chairman indicated that he was opening the meeting as Chairman-designate, in accordance with the consensus expressed at the General Council regarding the slate of appointments of Chairmanships of bodies under the Trade Negotiating Committee.
  - A. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA
3. The Group adopted the following agenda:
  - A. Adoption of the Agenda
  - B. Election of the Chairman
  - C. Organization of the Work (Regional Trade Agreements)
  - D. Other Business
- B. ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN
4. The Group confirmed the appointment of Mr. Eduardo Pérez Motta (Mexico) as its Chairman, in accordance with the consensus reached at the General Council of 11 February 2004.
5. The Chairman thanked all delegations for the trust placed upon him and stated that he was available at any time to delegations. It was an honour and a privilege, but also a commitment, to work with all delegations participating in the proceedings of the Group.
- C. ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK (REGIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS)
6. The Chairman clarified that the meeting concerned only the negotiations on rules and procedures relating to regional trade agreements (RTAs); other issues dealt with by the Group would be taken up at another meeting. Given that the last meeting of the Group relating to RTAs had taken place in July 2003, he viewed this meeting as a first step to re-launch work and move discussions towards a work programme that, while remaining flexible, would enable substantive negotiations to continue progressing at a sustained pace. Following these comments, the Chairman turned the meeting into informal mode, to pursue discussions regarding the organization of work.
7. At the end of these discussions, the Chairman reverted back to formal mode. He conveyed his and Members' highest degree of appreciation for the work accomplished by his predecessor, Ambassador T. Groser. Noting the good atmosphere prevailing in the Group, he stated that it appeared that the Group was ready to take up the work from where it had been left eight months before. He intended to use the informal mode of meeting as much as possible, as this allowed the

Group to proceed with greater flexibility. In the light of the discussions, he informed the Group that three papers would be made available well in advance of the next meeting: a Chair's stock-taking paper on transparency of RTAs; his suggested roadmap for the sequencing of discussions on systemic issues; and a "mock" presentation of the Canada-Chile FTA by the Secretariat.

8. The Chairman proposed that the next meeting of the Group, devoted to the consideration of RTA matters, to take place on 5 May 2004.

9. Finally, the Chairman stated that he viewed the issue of regional trade agreements as of considerable responsibility for all. At stake was the credibility of the WTO and, to a considerable degree, the operational nature of the Committee on Regional Trade Agreements.

D. OTHER BUSINESS

10. No issue was raised under this agenda item.

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