

(TS//SI//NF) EU, Japan Study Ways to Respond to U.S. Tactics in Doha Round Talks

(TS//SI//NF) The EU and Japan were engaged as of early December in strategy sessions aimed at a common handling policy to deal with potential U.S. moves in the Doha Round negotiations. There was a conviction in both Brussels and Tokyo, according to Japanese reporting, that great care must be taken to avoid falling prey to U.S. moves designed to extort concessions through exaggerated initial demands. Regarding U.S. domestic supports for agriculture, for example, Japanese Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries Toshikatsu Matsuoka and EU Agriculture Commissioner Marianne Fischer-Boel recently pondered whether to jump-start the negotiations by asking the U.S. for a specific dollar figure in reduced supports. The problem for the EU, it was noted, is whether or not the proposed \$17 billion mark is an acceptable point of departure, since U.S. supports at that level are judged to be in no way comparable to the breadth of market access that Brussels put on the table last July. A figure of \$14 to \$15 billion would be more in line with the EU's thinking, Fischer-Boel indicated. The EU also had concerns that Washington may be headed for a showdown with developing countries over special products. As for sensitive products, Fischer-Boel's deputy chef de cabinet, Klaus-Dieter Borchardt, hinted to the Japanese that the EU may be willing to go lower than its current official limit of 8 percent, possibly as low as 4 to 5 percent; however, that would be hard for Japan to accept. Borchardt also tried to allay Japanese fears that the EU might try again to enter into a bilateral, under-the-table deal with the U.S. (as had happened in Cancun in 2003), saying that Brussels had learned its lesson with respect to such back-door actions.

Unconventional

Japanese leadership

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