



UNITED STATES  
ASSOCIATION OF  
IMPORTERS OF  
TEXTILES AND  
APPAREL

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March 1, 2006

Honorable Don Stephenson  
Chairman, Negotiating Group on Market Access  
World Trade Organization  
Centre William Rappard  
Rue de Lausanne, 154  
CH-1211 Geneva 21, Switzerland

Dear Ambassador Stephenson:

Earlier this week, on Monday, February 27, as part of the NAMA Week negotiating activities in Geneva, a "Meeting With Textile Industry" was held within the Centre William Rappard, hosted by the European Communities Delegation. The invited speakers at that meeting were representatives of the European Apparel and Textile Organisation (EURATEX) and National Council of Textile Organizations (NCTO), who used the occasion to advocate a "special textile sectoral" for the purpose of creating additional protection and delaying trade liberalization.

The U.S. Association of Importers of Textiles and Apparel, whose membership includes U.S. manufacturers, importers, retailers and related service providers, represents significant stakeholders in the textile sector. Our members account for more than \$100 billion in trade per annum in these goods in the United States market alone. USA-ITA is a strong supporter of the World Trade Organization and has a vital stake in the liberalization of trade in both goods and services. Thus, on behalf of the association, I write to express our great concern that the World Trade Organization, and the Negotiating Group on Market Access in particular, provided a platform for a private sector lobbying meeting with WTO delegates that focused exclusively on resurrecting protection in the textile and apparel sectors.

USA-ITA is steadfastly opposed to any attempt to establish a separate sectoral negotiation for textiles if the purpose is to turn back the clock and eliminate trade liberalization for the textile and clothing sector. We spent ten years waiting for the integration of the textiles sector into the WTO. And we spent more than 40 years being outside the trade rules, as the exception to the GATT and the WTO. Elimination of trade barriers in textiles, like all other goods, is essential to the growth of the global trading system and the prosperity of both developed and developing countries.

The Hong Kong WTO Ministerial Declaration, like the NAMA Framework, makes clear that any sectorals should be for the purpose of providing liberalization in addition to that which is agreed by the full membership of the WTO, with participation in the additional sectoral liberalization to be non-mandatory. Certainly sectorals are not for the purpose of limiting market access. The goal for the NAMA negotiations is to open markets and reduce barriers to trade.

Of all of the "Open Meetings on Sectoral Initiatives and Non-Tariff Barriers" included on the WTO NAMA Negotiations calendar for the week of February 27, the unprecedented meeting on textiles stands alone as solely advocating a return to **more** protection, not increased trade liberalization through the sectoral process. Each of the other meetings, while focused on particular sectors and hosted by a variety of

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delegations, does not appear to include private sector representatives who are advocating action that would undermine the credibility of the WTO commitment to market opening.

USA-ITA respectfully urges that the WTO should not permit its premises and good offices to be used as a platform for industry lobbies to present the delegates with a solely one-sided perspective. We ask that the Secretariat set guidelines to prevent any future recurrence of this type of manipulation of the WTO open process. We would be most pleased to participate in any meetings that are conducted in a balanced manner.

USA-ITA further respectfully requests that this letter be circulated to each of the delegations.

Sincerely,



Laura E. Jones  
Executive Director

cc: Director-General Pascal Lamy