

**WTO NEWS: SPEECHES — DG PASCAL LAMY**  
**Ministerial Segment — Panel on Biodiversity and Trade**  
**Convention on Biological Diversity**  
**8th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-8)**  
[http://www.wto.org/English/news\\_e/sppl\\_e/sppl22\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/English/news_e/sppl_e/sppl22_e.htm)

**Video message on 28 March, 2006**

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am grateful for the opportunity to be able to speak to you today on the relationship between biodiversity and trade. There is no doubt in my mind that both trade and biodiversity policies have the capacity to be mutually reinforcing. However, for mutual reinforcement to truly take place, policy-makers in both the trade and environment domains must continue to search for the right balance between the two sets of policy goals.

The Convention on Biological Diversity and the WTO stand side-by-side today in the canvass of rules that the international community has been weaving to make the world a more orderly place. While these rules do not exhaust every facet of the relationship between biodiversity and trade, it is critical that they successfully interface.

Today, more than ever before, we have become conscious of the fact that we do not simply live on a planet, but live on what is itself a “living planet”. There are many reasons why that planet needs to be kept alive. First, is the wellbeing of the human race — which cannot itself thrive in an unhealthy ecosystem. But, second, is our moral and ethical responsibility to preserve the flora and fauna on whose habitats we intrude as we construct our own. The preservation of our biological diversity is a responsibility that we owe not only to this generation, but to future generations too.

From a Darwinian perspective, extinction is the fate of species who lose in the struggle for survival. However, today, it is widely recognized that in addition to the process of natural extinction, human intervention has accelerated the disappearance of valuable species — ones that will not be replaced. It is incumbent upon us to examine our role in the loss of biodiversity, and to do our utmost to preserve the genetic make-up of our planet, its species diversity, and the diversity of its ecosystems. The WTO stands ready to collaborate.

It is undoubted that completely unregulated trade can be harmful for biodiversity. Trade opening needs to be accompanied by the appropriate set of domestic policies — environmental and otherwise — to deliver its promised welfare gains. However, in the management of biodiversity, I note that trade has repeatedly proven itself to be an important tool for environmental policy-makers. It can create value for biological resources, giving people an incentive for conservation.

The story of the African elephant, and the experience of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species in preserving that elephant, says it all. While completely unmanaged trade in ivory had led to a serious decline in the African elephant population, more managed trade under CITES, now acts as an incentive for local communities to protect the elephant. With managed trade, the elephant in some parts of Africa is no longer seen as a menace — as an animal that treads over crops and destroys agricultural land, but as a valuable resource. This is but one example of the successful synergies we can obtain between trade and the preservation of our finite set of biological resources.

The destruction of habitats and the extinction of species can actually be stopped when trade becomes an instrument for conservation.

There are various sets of rules, discussions and negotiations in the WTO that have a direct bearing on biodiversity. The ongoing negotiations on agriculture in the Doha Round are understandably, of course, critical from your standpoint. I know that many of our colleagues in the CBD are following them closely. While the negotiations are seeking to expand agricultural market access through the reduction of tariffs, they also aim at the reduction of subsidies that distort trade. Many of these subsidies have been destructive to the environment, encouraging a faster pace of land conversion, a loss of forests and of biological diversity. It is important that WTO members persevere in bringing these subsidies down.

I wish to draw the attention of this audience to what is known as the “Green Box” set of measures within the WTO Agreement on Agriculture. That Green Box explicitly authorizes countries to use subsidies for certain specific objectives, like environmental preservation. The Green Box is also being discussed in the Doha Round, and I hope that you — the environmental community — will continue to provide us with fresh ideas on how it can best serve you.

Discussion in the WTO on the relationship between the TRIPS Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity has been equally important for you. It is, of course, important to recognize at the outset that the membership of different international agreements is seldom identical. In this case, it is not identical either.

Having said that, clearly the WTO is not a legal system that operates in isolation — it simply cannot; and nor can the CBD. In dispute after dispute, the Appellate Body of the WTO has confirmed that the WTO is capable of taking other bodies of international law into account. The objective of ongoing discussions is to ensure a harmonious co-existence between the different legal regimes that we have created internationally.

The issues of access to genetic resources, of prior informed consent and of benefit sharing are all being explored in the WTO. They are also being examined in WIPO — another important partner in the intellectual property domain. Our members continue to be divided on how best to address these issues, with some wanting an amendment of the TRIPS agreement, and others saying that there is no conflict between the WTO and the CBD warranting such a change. The discussions must still run their course.

Whatever their outcome, it is incumbent on all countries to use intellectual property rights in a manner that fosters biodiversity — all countries have a responsibility. It suffices to look at rainforests — often labeled as our “medicinal stockpile” — to know that intellectual property rights must be used judiciously. We must reward those who contribute to maintaining our genetic diversity and must reward innovators, be they indigenous communities, pharmaceutical companies, or otherwise.

In the Doha Round, the WTO is also looking at the relationship between its rules and the specific trade obligations contained in multilateral environmental agreements. This may provide another avenue for enshrining a harmonious co-existence between the WTO and other legal regimes. CITES has repeatedly been discussed in these negotiations.

Ladies and gentlemen, to conclude, allow me to say that I see no conflict between trade and the environment. Countries, and international institutions, must simply ensure that they pursue their various policies coherently.

With this message, I wish you every success in your deliberations at this Ministerial Segment of the CBD. I leave you in the good hands of my deputy, Mr. Harsha Singh, who will be representing me.

Thank you for your attention.