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*International Trade*

**Taiwan Endorses Plurilateral Approach to WTO Talks**

By Bryce Baschuk

Dec. 22 — Taiwan's top trade minister, John Chen-Chung Deng, said he supports the trend toward negotiating plurilateral trade deals among like-minded World Trade Organization (WTO) members.

"We will get on board with all these plurilaterals—the Trade in Services Agreement, the Environmental Goods Agreement. They work," he told Bloomberg BNA in a recent interview.

Deng joins a growing chorus of trade officials who say they will increasingly pursue limited trade deals among smaller groups of willing parties instead of the more comprehensive, consensus-based negotiating format of the 2001 Doha Round.

The week of Dec. 14, WTO members eschewed a consensus agreement on the future of the Doha Development Agenda and acknowledged that some nations are more interested in tackling new approaches and new issues going forward (See previous story, 12/22/15).

**Information Technology Agreement Signatory**

Taiwan was among the 53 parties that last week signed the plurilateral Information Technology Agreement (ITA) that will slash trade tariffs on an array of technology products valued at \$1.3 trillion per year (See previous story, 12/17/15).

Deng described the deal as a "success" and said it will benefit key players in the Taiwan technology industry such as Acer Inc., ASUSTeK Computer Inc., HTC Corp. and Microtek International Inc.

Deng said it was unfortunate that the agreement did not include liquid-crystal display (LCD) panels in its list of 201 technology products and hoped that LCDs could someday be incorporated into a future tariff-cutting deal.

In July, Taiwan nearly balked on joining the deal because China refused to include LCD screens into the ITA product list (See previous story, 07/21/15).

Deng said the seven-year phase-out periods that China had requested for many of its tariff lines were "far too long" for an industry that evolves on a much faster time frame.

"Overall, I need to emphasize that we are pleased with the result," Deng told Bloomberg BNA. "I think WTO is a live mechanism; we still have a chance to improve it."

Though the updated ITA was negotiated among a subset of WTO members, it required them to eliminate import tariffs on a most-favored-nation basis—meaning that any duty-free terms would be offered to all WTO members.

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