



26 January 2022

(22-0611)

Page: 1/3

**Committee on Agriculture
Special Session**

**REPORT BY AMBASSADOR GLORIA ABRAHAM PERALTA TO THE
COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE IN SPECIAL SESSION**

24 JANUARY 2022

1. The main objective of this meeting is to give Members the opportunity to table new submissions, and to discuss the way forward in the agriculture negotiations.
2. Following the announcement of the postponement of MC12, Members resolved to maintain the momentum in the negotiations and build on the progress made thus far. It is therefore important for us to chart a way forward making the best possible use of the additional time gained as a result of the postponement.
3. Of course, the uncertainty regarding the dates of the Ministerial meeting makes our task more difficult, especially considering that this would very much depend on the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is out of our hands. What is in our hands, however, is our commitment to work together and prepare a mutually acceptable agricultural package to be adopted as soon as the health situation permits us to hold a ministerial meeting.
4. It is therefore important for us to maintain the momentum, building on the significant work undertaken in 2021, in order to be ready for the Ministerial Conference, even if it is convened at short notice.
5. If you will recall, we continued the intensive facilitator-led process launched in October 2020 until June 2021, alongside regular CoA Special Session meetings and dedicated discussions on PSH and SSM. In the second part of the year, we focused our efforts on making gradual progress towards textual negotiations for an outcome at MC12.
6. In total, in 2021, more than 30 submissions were made, and 35 open discussion meetings dedicated to CoA-SS, PSH and SSM were held. In addition, about 50 consultations in different formats were arranged by the Facilitators and myself, not counting the numerous bilateral and small group consultations.
7. On the basis of this extensive work, I circulated first a report on the way forward towards MC12 on 16 June 2021 (JOB/AG/202), followed by a first draft text on 29 July (JOB/AG/215) and finally a second draft text in my report to the TNC circulated on 23 November (TN/AG/50).
8. The second draft text built on the first following a very intensive consultation process. My objective was to put on the table the closest possible starting point for a realistic, balanced, and meaningful package at MC12.
9. Although most Members expressed reservations about the text, as it did not fully reflect their initial ambitions or positions, they nevertheless considered it a realistic basis for negotiating an outcome at MC12 in most areas, but with some remaining gaps, more or less wide depending on the topic.
10. I would like to reiterate that the entire text, like any other such text, has to be seen as being in square brackets, because "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed", and that it is up to Members – and only to Members – to close the gaps and agree on an outcome for the agriculture negotiations.

11. It is in this context that I would like to hear today your views on the process forward. I convened an informal meeting at the HoDs level on Tuesday, 18 January to seek their political guidance on the way forward. Today, I would like to have more in-depth discussions on the best way forward and more specifically establish what should be our objective in the short term and how we can re-engage effectively to turn the postponement of the Ministerial Conference into an opportunity.

12. Turning to my report.

13. I held consultations at the HoDs level with around 30 delegations and Group Coordinators. Members supported the need to sustain momentum in the negotiations and find ways to make the best possible use of the time ahead despite the current uncertainties regarding the possible date of MC12.

14. Several Members stressed the importance of trust and the need to ensure that the process remained open, inclusive and transparent. Many Members supported the continuation of consultations in various formats, including bilateral and small group meetings, as they could enable focused exchanges, but stressed the need to use this type of setting only as a complement to open meetings and to report back to the wider Membership in a timely manner. The importance of ensuring the presence of Group Coordinators in these meetings was also emphasized.

15. Let me stress in this respect that I have indeed always considered inclusiveness and transparency as fundamental principles of the negotiation process and have therefore regularly reported on my consultations, as I am doing now, and have always considered these consultations only as preparatory exchanges for discussions within the wider Membership.

16. Several Members also insisted on the need to ensure enough time between meetings to give Members, and especially groups of Members, the opportunity to reflect, consult internally and adjust their positions as necessary throughout the process. Some Members also suggested to explore ways to reinvigorate PSH and SSM dedicated sessions.

17. Some Members considered that pending a decision on the date of MC12, text-based negotiations could be more difficult. It was suggested to use the additional time available to undertake technical work on some issues to better understand the positions.

18. Several Members noted that the latest text circulated in document TN/AG/50, was the first one in more than a decade and represented a reasonable assessment of the current state of play in the negotiations. The text constituted therefore an appropriate basis to continue the negotiations and backtracking should be avoided. However, there was a general agreement that more work would be required to get an improved version of the text.

19. Several Members stressed the need to revise this draft text in light of the remaining gaps in negotiating positions, notably on PSH but also on other topics, including Domestic Support, Market Access, Export Restrictions, Special Safeguard Mechanism, Transparency, Cotton or on the introductory part of the draft text.

20. Members expressed divergent views on what could constitute the priorities for future discussions in line with their past positions, as well as on what would be required to ensure a balanced outcome. Several Members emphasized the need to consider a possible outcome aimed at improving food security and livelihood, including in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

21. Some Members indicated their readiness to consider the possibility to disentangle a topic from the overall package in case a consensus could be reached separately, with some mentioning the draft decision on exempting WFP food purchases from export restrictions.

22. Many Members emphasized the fact that the outcome of the negotiations was in the hands of the Members and not the Chair and stressed the need for all Members to adopt a realistic, pragmatic and flexible approach in the upcoming negotiations. One Member stressed the importance for all Members to consider how they could contribute to an outcome and alluded to past signalling conferences where Members were invited to send these kinds of signals.

23. This concludes my report. This meeting has been very useful, and I expect that we can build on our discussions today and work towards an outcome that would be acceptable to all Members. This process is a Members' driven process. As stated on several occasions, I am only here to facilitate and assist you to make progress and eventually reach compromise solutions that would reflect the interests of all.
