

Business backs crucial need for Doha breakthrough

From Mr Thomas R. Vant.

Sir, As an organisation representing business in the 30 countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, BIAC agrees with David Eldon ("Perils of a trade round's collapse", August 26) that the failure of the Doha round would be "notoriously bad for international business" and would have negative repercussions on all of our economies.

The OECD business community welcomes the arrival of Pascal Lamy, the new director-general of the World Trade Organisation, who has high-profile experience as a trade negotiator. Mr Lamy has a Herculean task before him to breathe life into the stalled Doha trade negotiations, especially given the reluctance of

most governments to compromise on the key issues at hand.

WTO members have only about 100 days left to take key decisions on the framework of the negotiations. If they fail to break the remaining deadlocks - in particular on agriculture and industrial goods - by the end of the next WTO ministerial meeting in Hong Kong, a significant opportunity to boost global trade and to promote economic growth and global development around the world will be lost.

We would like to reassure Mr Eldon that international business is indeed working actively to "remind governments how important it is for the Doha round to succeed". For OECD companies, the success of the round is critical, as their growth lies

in improved access to international markets. We believe that this can still be achieved through an economically meaningful and balanced result in the Doha round.

However, it is up to governments, not business, to make the crucial decisions for a successful trade round. Frankly, their performance to date has fallen far short of the mark. We wish Mr Lamy every success in bringing governments to the negotiating table for a decisive result, which, after all, is clearly in their own best interest.

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