

# Pascal Lamy Sets Doha Talks

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WWD

June 26, 2008

GENEVA — World Trade Organization director general Pascal Lamy on Wednesday called for ministers from 35 to 40 trading powers, including the U.S., to meet in Geneva starting July 21 to try and clinch a long-sought deal in the troubled Doha round of talks.

But trade officials are skeptical over the chances an agreement can be reached because major hurdles stand in the way. These include political uncertainties in the U.S. with the upcoming presidential election and last year's nonrenewal by Congress of President Bush's trade promotion authority, divisions within the European Union and the tough stance taken by emerging nations such as Argentina, India and South Africa.

EU diplomats also said French President Nicolas Sarkozy might rally support to veto any deal that fell short on substantial market openings for industrial goods. Last week, Sarkozy criticized EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson over his handling of the talks.

A spokesman for U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab said: "While there has been progress in recent days, in the weeks leading up to the ministerial meeting, there still is a lot of work and still important differences in agriculture, NAMA [non-agricultural market access] and services."

Lamy proposed the meeting during a closed-door session and diplomats in attendance said he thought there was more than a 50 percent chance that a breakthrough blueprint deal could be brokered on how to lower subsidies, tariffs and other barriers in agriculture and industrial goods. The talks have been stalled because industrial powers, such as the U.S. and the EU, and key emerging economies, such as Brazil and India, have not been able to resolve their differences in agriculture, where cotton subsidies have been a key sticking point, and industrial goods, including textiles and apparel.