

EU trade chief warns of high stakes in WTO talks

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EU trade chief Peter Mandelson warned Europe's trade partners Wednesday against making "unrealistic demands", saying they could walk away from crunch trade talks empty handed.

"To some of our negotiating partners, my message is this: stop hiding behind your criticism of the EU, and making unrealistic demands," he said in a speech to the European Parliament.

"Instead enter into real negotiation with us on all issues. The alternative is to risk everything," he told the parliament's trade committee.

Brussels has come under fire for its offer in trade talks to cut agriculture subsidies and tariffs, which its WTO partners say does not go far enough.

WTO negotiators are working against the clock to flesh out an outline agreement ahead of a mid-December WTO ministerial meeting in Hong Kong despite growing gloom about the prospects for a broad accord.

Mandelson claims that the talks so far have focused too much on the EU's agriculture and insists that another offer is not in the works.

"We have no plan to make a further offer. To do so would simply further unbalance the negotiation," he said.

"The time has come for others to match the effort we have made. When there is something on the table to interest the EU in industrial goods and services, our partners will find us fully engaged," he added.

In his answers to members of the committee, Mandelson singled out Brazil as a target of his criticism.