AGREEING AND
IMPLEMENTING THE DOHA
ROUND OF THE WTO

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FOREWORD

The Doha Round, which is the first major trade negotiation under the new World Trade Organization (established by the GATT Uruguay Round Treaty effective January 1, 1995), has navigated an extraordinarily difficult course. The Third WTO Ministerial Conference in Seattle December 1999 was meant to launch the Round, but this failed because of the important impact of changing membership and the decision-making processes of the WTO (compared to the GATT which had eight trade rounds). The fourth WTO Ministerial Conference held in Doha, Qatar in November 2001 was much more successful and seemed on course to launch the Round, but at the Fifth Ministerial in Cancun, Mexico (September 2003) the process failed, with major confrontations between various groupings of nation members concerning a variety of difficult international economic policy conflicts. The Sixth Ministerial Conference was held in Hong Kong in December 2005, resulting in progress and some optimism, which by the summer of 2006 had turned more negative, resulting, in a 'suspension' of the negotiations. Nevertheless efforts continue to move the process forward, amid considerable optimism that this negotiation has economic and even geopolitical importance to world peace and the increasing alleviation of poverty.

This book is of major importance to international trade law, as it is one of the first major scholarly and practitioner appraisals of the Doha Round to be undertaken with a view to examining the profound impact of the negotiation for the world. It addresses three important issues (or sets of issues) which are central to the Doha negotiations, namely:

• development policy (e.g. special and differential treatment);
• trade policy concerns (e.g. market access to agricultural and industrial goods and access to services, trade facilitation and the improvement of ‘rules’); and
• ‘trade and issues’ (e.g. trade and social rights, trade and environment, and trade and health).
The editor is certainly correct in selecting these issues, as well as addressing the extremely important dispute settlement process (sometimes treated more outside the Doha talks than inside them).

These four subjects are the basic themes of this book and these issues will likely be decisive for the proper-functioning of the WTO system. If the Doha Round is not successful, the multilateral approach of the WTO will be highly endangered, resulting in a set of bilateral and regional efforts. And it is not certain, whether such bilateralism ‘could well become the catalyst for further multilateral trade liberalisation in the future’ (the assumption of one of the authors) or whether it would destroy the ability of the world community to come to solutions concerning the reduction of poverty, capacity building of developing countries, trade liberalisation, trade facilitation, effective dispute settlement and to secure sustainable development and an environmentally sound and socially just world order.

An important characteristic of this book is the fact that the authors come from three different continents (Europe, America and Asia) and that they are well-known scholars and practitioners who convey insights how the Doha talks developed and what they will mean in practice for the world community. The book treats some of the most crucial aspects of WTO Law in an accessible way and should be warmly welcomed by scholars and practitioners alike as a balanced and very valuable reference tool.

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