

Lamy reappointed WTO chief for second term

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GENEVA (Reuters) - Members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) reappointed Pascal Lamy as director-general for a second four-year term, the WTO said Thursday.

The 62-year-old Frenchman was the only candidate to head the body that referees world trade and was approved by consensus at a meeting of the WTO General Council.

It was the first time in the WTO's 15-year history that the candidacy had not been contested.

The first term of the marathon-running former trade chief of the European Union has been dominated by efforts to conclude the WTO's seven-year-old Doha round to liberalize world trade and help poor countries prosper through exports.

Lamy argues that concluding the round, to boost business confidence and bolster bulwarks against protectionism in the economic crisis, is the WTO's top priority.

"Beyond the trade-offs required to conclude the Doha round and also beyond the market access that it will bring, lies its hugely important systemic value," he told the council on Wednesday.

"The biggest prize in the Doha round is the certainty, predictability and stability it will bring to global trade. It is in a moment of crisis, such as the one we are witnessing today, that the value of this insurance policy increases."

Lamy, whose new term starts in September, told the council the 153-member state body had to address other issues such as climate change, food security, energy, labor and financial protectionism.

But serious work on these questions should not start until the immediate task of reaching a Doha deal was in sight. He estimated 80 percent of a Doha agreement was in the bag.

Lamy said the WTO's dispute settlement system, resolving trade rows between countries involving billions of dollars, was working well.

But developing countries need to be given more help to make use of the complex and expensive dispute processes, and more needs to be done to ensure all countries comply promptly with decisions of WTO dispute panels that go against them.

Besides bringing in ministers to clinch a Doha deal, the WTO should hold a regular ministerial conference this year to set strategy and review how the body is working, Lamy said.

He noted it had not held a ministerial conference since 2005. WTO rules require one every two years.

Lamy was widely credited with nursing French bank Credit Lyonnais -- now part of Credit Agricole -- back to health from near-bankruptcy. He became director-general of the WTO in September 2005.