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IN 2013

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It's time to learn from the stalled Doha round and overcome the gridlock of modern politics to solve the major problems facing the world, writes WTO director-general **Pascal Lamy**.

Some cities become synonymous with particular points of diplomatic history. Take Rio, Kyoto, Copenhagen, Durban and, of course, Doha. Over ten years ago, World Trade Organisation negotiators and diplomats descended on the Qatari city and launched a negotiating round aimed at modernising the rules of world trade by attuning them to the realities of 21st century commerce – including a greater focus on developing countries' concerns and aspirations.

Last month, Doha hosted another pressing global negotiation: the latest UN climate talks – a meeting deemed critical if global leaders are to agree an effective treaty to reduce carbon emissions.

Since 2001 we have seen progress in the WTO. Countries such as Russia, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia and Montenegro have joined. We have made rules on access to essential medicines for Aids, tuberculosis and malaria more flexible. We have seen many trade disputes settled peacefully and an improvement in the WTO's monitoring and surveillance functions, including monitoring of protectionist pressures.

We have also seen a new agreement on government procurement, providing new market opportunities and better rules to ensure value for public money and to fight against corruption. And new opportunities have opened up for the world's poorest countries on market access, accession to the WTO and funding for trade capacity-building.

Yet the full potential of the WTO Doha round is far from realised – it is, in fact, stalled – and some fear the climate talks might suffer the same stagnation and disappointment. Much can be learned across both agendas. It's time to look afresh at the hurdles that nations, organisations and global governance structures face in addressing these complex, interconnected global challenges so that future meetings might make urgently needed progress.

At the heart of the standstill in the WTO Doha negotiations – on both trade and climate change – lies a lack of consensus on the relative contributions that members at different levels of development could or should make. The international community



The Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations

is chaired by Pascal Lamy and includes distinguished international experts ranging from Jean-Claude Trichet, Bob Zoellick and Michelle Bachelet to Nandan Nilekani, Trevor Manuel and Lionel Barber. It will draw on the school's innovative interdisciplinary research – led by Professor Ian Goldin – and an analysis of global best practice.

» For more information, visit www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/commission

cannot ignore this question. While there is a clear understanding that, in an increasingly integrated world, national strength requires international co-operation, there is no commensurate investment in the multilateral system and collective problem-solving. To move forward on multilateral negotiations, we must address this basic question of finding the "right balance in contributions and responsibilities".

Meeting these global challenges requires leadership that can transcend the short-term and translate the needs of global co-operation and political capital into local priorities. Clearly, this is not easy. Yet critical questions regarding areas such as trade opening, climate change, migration, ageing, natural resource depletion, pandemics, cybersecurity and corporate taxation are absent from today's dominant political discourse. What little appetite once existed for international co-operation in these areas is at risk of evaporating under national short-term pressures. We need to urgently overcome this gridlock that characterises modern politics.

Concern about the increasing short-term preoccupation of governments, businesses and global institutions has prompted the Oxford Martin School at the University of Oxford to establish a high-level international Commission for Future Generations, which I am proud to chair.

Our challenge is to confront the rise of short-termism and identify ways to overcome this gridlock of modern politics in order to deal with key economic, social, climate, trade, security and other challenges of our time. Failure to do so heightens the risk that our societies will increasingly look inward, turning their back on global connectivity and future generations.

We need urgently to focus on the sustainability of our current economic and political models and the legacy we are leaving. Diplomatic hosts such as Doha should be known for action rather than failed ambitions and disappointments. Bridging this gap between knowledge and action must be the priority of every responsible community, government and organisation.