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## **WTO REMAINS TOP PRIORITY FOR INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS**

The NZ International Business Forum (NZIBF) agrees with visiting World Trade Organisation (WTO) Director General Pascal Lamy that the WTO should remain New Zealand's top trade priority.

"There is no substitute for WTO rules and for a robust multilateral process to bring down barriers to trade", said NZIBF Executive Director Stephen Jacobi. "We support unreservedly calls to complete the WTO Doha negotiations and are deeply disappointed at the lack of political will amongst the world's larger economies".

Mr Jacobi said free trade agreements (FTAs) allowed countries to move further and faster to open markets than the pace of the WTO currently allows, but did not resolve all issues.

"FTAs cannot deal effectively with subsidies and other trade distorting measures but they do bring down the costs of doing business by eliminating tariffs and non tariff barriers and freeing up services and investment. They also serve to put the economic relationship between the parties on a new level. New Zealand's FTAs actively seek to build on WTO disciplines wherever possible".

Mr Jacobi said in the current crisis a greater risk to the WTO was rising protectionism.

"The only way to stop protectionism is for governments, business and community leaders to resist it. Here in New Zealand there are increasing calls for subsidies for companies in trouble. This would be costly for the economy as a whole and for competitive business operating internationally."

Mr Jacobi said there was greater awareness of the cost of proliferating and sometimes inconsistent FTAs which was why New Zealand and others were increasingly negotiating in with groups of partners, including the recently signed Australia-ASEAN-NZ FTA and the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP).

### For further information

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### **About the NZ International Business Forum ([www.nzibf.co.nz](http://www.nzibf.co.nz))**

The Forum is a business organisation which aims to generate wealth for New Zealanders by helping ensure that New Zealand enterprises are fully integrated and engaged in the global economy and New Zealand's global competitive position is maximised. The Forum provides leadership, works with companies and other business organisations to implement key projects and articulates New Zealand's international business priorities to both the New Zealand Government and stakeholders. Forum participants represent companies and sectors with a turnover of over \$20 billion.