

From POLITICO – *MORNING TRADE* (Sept. 12, 2017)

WTO PANEL HOLDS INFORMAL MEETING ADDRESSING U.S. APPELLATE BODY CONCERNS: The chairman of the WTO's Dispute Settlement Body is holding an informal meeting on Friday to address concerns espoused primarily by the United States over the appellate body and how to fill the panel's three vacancies. Junichi Ihara, Japan's ambassador to WTO and the DSB chairman, made the decision to hold such a meeting as soon as possible after the U.S. waged complaints in August regarding how to handle appellate reports that had been written or championed by appellate body members whose terms had since expired.

The United States, which has not shied away from controversy at the Appellate Body in recent years, argued that the process to fill three vacancies on the panel - two seats are open now, while a third will open in December - should not begin until that issue and other long-standing concerns are appropriately addressed.

Setting up a showdown: The U.S. appeared to be relatively alone in voicing its concerns, a Geneva trade official told Morning Trade. Fourteen WTO members lined up to air their worries that the vacancies would have negative systemic effects on the dispute settlement system, with a number of those urging not to tie the U.S. concerns to the launching of a new selection process, the source said.