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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Statement by the Honourable Daniel Glickman Secretary of Agriculture

On behalf of the United States, as host and Chair of the World Trade Organization's Third Ministerial Conference, let me welcome all of you to Seattle. I thank each of you for your participation in this Ministerial and its historic mission.

Let me also applaud and thank Director-General Moore, the members of the WTO Secretariat, the governments of the State of Washington and King County, and the Seattle community for the hard work they have done to prepared for this event.

THE RECORD OF THE PAST

As we meet today, we look ahead to the launch of the first multilateral negotiating Round since the creation of the WTO. We also look back, across the five decades to the day the United States joined 22 other nations as the founding contracting parties to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

In these five decades, we have worked together – each of us with our own individual goals in mind; but, at our best, mindful of a broader mission of mutual benefit, shared prosperity, and strengthening peace. The accomplishment has been remarkable.

- We have reduced tariffs by 90 per cent, and broadened our agenda to address quantitative restrictions, technical standards, subsidies, government procurement, intellectual property, agriculture, sanitary and phytosanitary standards, services, and dispute settlement.
- We have expanded membership, from the original 23 GATT Members to today's 135 WTO Members, extending the trading system's principles of open markets, transparency and rule of law throughout the world.
- And as a result, we have given the people of all our nations an unprecedented set of opportunities for growth, prosperity, and confidence in the future.

In the pursuit of these goals, each of us has had to make difficult decisions. An open economy means competition; and competition means change and adjustment to it. Each of us has the responsibility to accompany an open trade policy with a commitment to education, job training, and adjustment. But each of us also can observe that the developments of the past fifty years have been almost unambiguously positive.

Since the foundation of the GATT, a progressively opening world economy has allowed global trade to grow fifteen-fold. World economic production has grown six-fold, and per capita income nearly tripled. And in consequence, life had improved nearly everywhere in the world.

During the same period, as this economic growth has helped stimulate scientific progress and improve health and education, world life expectancy has grown by twenty years; infant mortality has dropped by two-thirds; and the threat of hunger began to recede.

And in the financial crisis of the past two years, the trading system proved its worth in another way. The strength of the rules-based trading system, during a period of great suffering and economic pressure, helped all of us to avert a cycle of protection and retaliation similar to that which deepened the Depression of the 1930s. The trading system helped to guarantee affected countries the markets necessary for recovery; shielded farmers and manufacturing exporters world-wide, including in the United States; and helped avert the political tensions that can arise when economic crises leads to trade conflicts.

THE CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE

Fifty years after the foundation of the trading system, therefore, we can take pride in the work we have done together. But we also must not let pride in our accomplishment make us complacent in the face of the challenges and opportunities before us in this Ministerial Conference.

- Prosperity and growth: the opportunity to open the world economy more fully; raise living standards for the world's families; and create new opportunities for trade, growth and employment for the next generation of farmers, entrepreneurs and working people.
- Development: the opportunity to fully integrate the people of the developing world, and in particular the least developed countries, and ensure that they reap all the benefit they should from the world economy.
- The end of the Cold War: the opportunity to help the transition economies of Europe and Asia to reform at home and reach markets abroad.
- The scientific and technological revolution: the opportunity to foster innovation and creativity; and to more rapidly disseminate the benefits of information technologies, 21st century agriculture, telecommunications and other cutting-edge techniques to the world.
- The quality of life: the opportunity to ensure that our work in trade policy does all it can to complement and support protection of the environment, guarantee consumer protection and safety, and promote respect for the internationally recognized core labour standards to which we committed ourselves in Singapore three years ago.
- And institutional reform: the opportunity to improve and update the institutional structures of the trading system, to ensure that it continues to enjoy the strongest possible base of public support.

ACCESSIONS

Since our last Ministerial Conference in Geneva, we have had the pleasure to welcome several new Members to the WTO: Kyrgyzstan, Latvia and Estonia. And we have noted great progress by many other aspiring members from all over the world, including our recent completion of a very strong bilateral agreement with the largest prospective member, China.

Each of these economies has made commercially meaningful commitments in all areas, meeting the high standards we have all set for ourselves and our trading partners. The results will contribute to the domestic reforms underway in each of these nations; help them improve their economic efficiency and growth prospects; and bolster the trading system as a whole. They also bring us closer to day when the WTO will make its full contribution to restoring all the transition economies to their rightful place in the world economy.

THE NEW ROUND

At the same time, as we prepared for our role as Chair of the Ministerial and consensus grew for the launch of a new Round, we devoted much of this year to the development of an agenda for the Round.

Our goals are a negotiating agenda which is ambitious enough to meet the challenges of a new century and address the top priorities of all participants; focused enough to complete within a reasonable period; and able to achieve results that meet the standard our predecessors have set. If we approve a Ministerial Declaration that meets these tests, we can:

- Aggressively reform agricultural trade by lowering trade barriers, substantially reducing trade-distorting subsidies and other measures. Thus we can create opportunities for farm and ranch families world-wide, support prosperity in rural areas, and increase food security and fight hunger by giving WTO Members access to diverse sources of food at market prices.
- Further open world trade in services and industrial goods, helping promote world-wide growth and allowing more nations to gain access to new technologies, find new markets around the world, and create high-wage employment.
- Examine the basic questions of trade facilitation and customs, to ensure that trade proceeds as smoothly and easily as it should in today's high-tech world.
- Meet the challenge of the 21st century, notably by ensuring that electronic commerce develops as freely and rapidly as it should, and by helping us to ensure that farmers and ranchers can use biotechnology products approved through transparent, science-based, and timely regulatory processes, and consumers enjoy the benefit of safe and beneficial products.
- Promote development world-wide, by opening markets more fully to products especially from the least-developed countries, and offering significantly expanded technical assistance to ensure that all Members can meet their commitments, use the WTO and its dispute settlement mechanism as appropriate, and take greater advantage of market access opportunities.
- Ensure sustainable development, by opening trade areas such as environmental goods and services that improve environmental protection; and eliminating environmentally damaging subsidies such as agricultural export subsidies and fishery subsidies that contribute to overcapacity;
- Create a Working Group on the links between trade and core labour standards; and
- Ensure that the WTO itself meets the test of a more open and democratic world, by improving transparency and accessibility to the public throughout the organization.

This is a broad, ambitious, and achievable agenda. Here in Seattle, we can give it momentum through specific accomplishments in market access and transparency in government procurement, and extension of the moratorium on application of customs duties to electronic transmissions which place us on the road to success. And as the negotiations of the Round begin, we can proceed with the

assurance that we are on the right course. We take pride in the record of the past; we see the opportunities of the present clearly, and we look to the future with confidence and hope.

CONCLUSION

The realization of these hopes is a responsibility which rests upon us all. The United States will work at this Ministerial Conference, and in the work beyond, to ensure that we succeed. Together, we will close the book on fifty years of cooperation and achievement; and open a second half-century of progress, growth and strengthening peace.
