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VIET NAM

Statement by H.E. Mr Luong van Tu
Vice-Minister of Trade

(Speaking as an Observer)

The delegation of Vietnam would like to extend its warmest congratulations to the Fourth Session of the WTO Ministerial Conference. It is our great pleasure to participate in this Conference in the beautiful city of Doha. Amid all the recent political and economic turbulences, we believe this Conference will be a major opportunity for further strengthening the multilateral trading system, thus contributing to economic growth, development and prosperity of all nations.

Aware of the potential benefits of a fair and equitable multilateral trading system, Vietnam has firmly committed itself to the process of strengthening the system as well as the accession to the WTO. As an acceding country from the developing world, Vietnam attaches great importance to the reaffirmation in the draft Ministerial Declaration of a strong commitment by the WTO Members to accelerate and facilitate the accession proceedings as quickly as possible, and also to promote acceding countries' participation in future multilateral trade negotiations.

In this context, Vietnam warmly welcomes the significant progress in the admission of the new Members, and particularly welcomes the accession of China into this Organization. At the same time, Vietnam is also concerned about the fact that acceding countries are in some cases requested to make commitments which are higher than those of WTO Members having the same level of development. Vietnam, therefore, supports the proposals by some Members to accord acceding developing countries, in particular those with very low income, with flexibility needed to meet their development objectives. In our view, WTO Members should only request from developing countries such commitments that are in accordance with their development priorities and implementation capabilities.

Vietnam is in the process of accelerating its accession to the WTO. With the support and constructive engagement of all Members of the Working Party, we have basically concluded the first stage of the accession process. Following this Conference, we will soon submit our initial offers in goods and services for substantive negotiations on market access. We are convinced that our WTO membership would further help to boost Vietnam's trade and to secure sustainable development of the country. On this occasion, I would like to express deep appreciation for the support given by WTO Members to our early accession to this Organization.

Vietnam follows with deep interest the on-going process of trade negotiations within the WTO framework. These negotiations, however, should be balanced, taking into full account the interests of all Members, particularly those of the developing countries, and should not be over-ambitious to cover those issues that are not directly related to trade. It is only in this context that the balance between rights and obligations can be struck and prosperity of all nations can be assured. We

support the rule-based multilateral trading system as one of the essential instruments for the promotion of economic development, the facilitation of developing countries' integration into the global economy, and the alleviation of poverty worldwide. We also recognize the critical importance of the rule-based multilateral trading system and of transparent decision-making process in the WTO managing globalization and reducing the scope for unilateral actions.

As a final point, Vietnam favours a strengthened cooperation and coordination between WTO and other international institutions such as UNCTAD, UNDP, the World Bank and IMF since the issues of global trade and development policies can no longer be dealt with in isolation. It is our belief that our mutual benefits can only be maximized through shared effort and responsibility.
