

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/MIN(99)/ST/109
2 December 1999

(99-5310)

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
Third Session
Seattle, 30 November - 3 December 1999

Original: English

BELARUS

Statement by H. E. Prof. Ural Latypov, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs

(Speaking as an Observer)

The Belarus delegation has been following the Conference debate with great attention. True, it is here at Seattle that the fundamental principles of the new trade and economic policy are being framed, and they will determine global development in the coming decade. This delegation associates itself with the spirit and concept of this policy as a whole.

Full-fledged integration to the world economy and the international trading system, including through accession to the WTO Agreements, are part of the sustainable development strategy and a priority of Belarus' multi-vector foreign policy.

I wish to express hope, that in the course of the coming round of multilateral trade negotiations, account shall be taken of the interests of the developing countries and countries in transition, and more coherence will be reached in the multilateral trading system, including by way of its extension to new members on favourable terms.

Belarus is appreciative of the initiatives in this respect undertaken prior to the Seattle Ministerial by the United States, on the extending of additional trade preferences to ACP and South-Eastern Europe countries.

Belarus also welcomes the constructive decision by the Conference to open the new round of multilateral trade negotiations, and approves of the initiative by the European Commission on enabling acceding countries and WTO observers to effectively participate in the round.

Considering the potential global impact of the new round of multilateral trade negotiations for the future of the international trading system as a whole, this delegation wishes to call upon governments of the leading WTO Member States to take the fullest possible account of the interests and coming economic policy changes of more than fifty new and future Members in the course of the round.

Unfortunately, the existing network of Multilateral Trade Agreements is still far from fully reflecting the special economic situation of many countries and especially of the economies in transition.

Institutional deficiencies and lack of instruments of economic governance alone, prevent the majority of developing and reforming economies from making efficient use of the WTO Agreements and facilities. I am in no doubt that you all realise the complexity of the task of co-ordinating an unprecedented economic and social reform with taking far-reaching commitments on an international

scale. But allow me also to share with you this delegation's profound conviction. It is that the participation in the multilateral trading system and the terms of such participation should be regarded as aimed to assist the process of reform, much rather than to be made conditional on it.

We realize that this problem also remains unsolved in a number of WTO countries, including both new and original Members. Accordingly, we are calling upon the WTO Secretariat, UNDP, UNCTAD, World Bank and the donors to channel their technical co-operation resources to the implementation of institutional reforms by providing support to all countries in need thereof.

The Republic of Belarus welcomes the initiative in this regard undertaken by the European Commission, on the establishment of a fund, to support ACP countries in their integration to the multilateral trading system. This also refers to Norway, on the subject of the creation of an independent legal WTO rules centre.

Belarus is also highly appreciative of the analytical support by the WTO and UNCTAD Secretariats, technical assistance of the Swiss, British and other Members' governments, technical advice by the European Commission, aimed at assisting the negotiating process of the accession of Belarus to the WTO.

My delegation would very much like this assistance to continue further on, in order "not to be left out in the cold".

From this delegation's perspective, the systemic priorities on the new round's agenda should include reaching by the multilateral trading system of genuine universality, including universal membership in the World Trade Organization. The fundamental principles – non-discrimination in international trade, predictability of improved market access, transparency of trade policies and rules, fair competition, fostering of sustainable development and economic liberalization strategies – should become truly universal.

My delegation associates itself with opinions voiced in the general discussion by many acceding countries, among which the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, on the desirability of removing artificial obstacles in the WTO accession proceedings. Accessions should be carried out on the basis of the principle of balance in rights and obligations. In this aspect Belarus is supportive of the example of the United States' realistic approach towards China, and calls upon all WTO Members to follow the same pattern in negotiating with other acceding countries.

A scrutiny of the GATT founders' experience reveals, that liberalization of market access in acceding countries should be implemented in an orderly, step-by-step fashion, in stages fine-tuned to each individual case. It should progress in parallel with growth in these countries' domestic demand, strengthening of competitiveness of their goods and services in external markets and increase in these countries' export revenues.

In the next couple of years the whole world is going to be challenged with the agenda of the new round of multilateral trade negotiations pivoted on the philosophy of true universality, openness and global membership. It seems that a first measure aimed at increased transparency and building civic society confidence in the WTO, could well be an extension of access to the WTO Dispute Settlement facility and to the WTO Integrated DataBase onto all interested governments, non-governmental and other international organizations, irrespective of their WTO status.

Furthermore, transparency and universality objectives would only gain in credibility if the World Trade Organization were to grant official working status to all of the six official languages of the United Nations, including Russian, Chinese and Arabic.

The Republic of Belarus will continue to invest every effort in the process of its accession to the WTO, as well as in the future work of the Organization as a Member. In the course of the multilateral round Belarus will be prepared to table substantive proposals with a view to further consolidate and strengthen the multilateral trading system.
