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MALTA

Statement by the Honourable Edwin Vassallo Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs

I would like to start this brief intervention by expressing our appreciation to the Government of Mexico for hosting this Fifth Session of the Ministerial Conference. We wish to thank our hosts for their warm welcome as well as for the efficient organization of the proceedings of the Conference.

As I am sure you all agree, the whole world is following our debates and waiting for positive developments. What is decided will have an impact on the lives of people all around the globe. This is particularly relevant in an increasingly integrated international economy in which most countries now participate. We concur with the view that the Doha Development Agenda, with its extensive agenda, has the potential to boost global trade and growth. Consequently, the material well-being of millions of people, the further development of their quality of life and the creation of new job opportunities can be brought about by an increase in global trade activity.

Malta, being a small, open economy and one which has participated in the international trading system for a very long time, is well aware of the advantages of a positive conclusion to the DDA. May I take this opportunity to emphasize that Malta is a strong believer in the gradual yet sustained move towards the liberalization of international trade. However, I believe that efforts towards further liberalization of trade should be complemented by the strengthening of global regulations for fair world trading. This would ensure the achievement of a level playing field in international trade. In line with these beliefs, the ongoing negotiations in this area should be as comprehensive as possible especially in the light of the important role this plays in the strengthening of global economic activity.

With regards to services, Malta is fully aware of the increasing contribution this sector is providing to global economic activity. Being a services-oriented economy itself, Malta thus supports initiatives to further develop this area whilst at the same time, providing countries with every opportunity to implement effective regulation in order to attain their respective domestic socio-economic objectives.

With respect to agriculture, I also would like to stress that we believe that any trade liberalization attempts for this sector should be fair and orderly and should allow scope for the provision of the necessary financial assistance to operators in this field to effectively restructure. We also want to reiterate our belief that agriculture has special features given the important contribution which it provides to socio-economic structures and development. We therefore continue to support a multifunctional approach to negotiations in this sector, one which takes full consideration of issues such as rural development, environmental protection and animal welfare.

In the area of trade in non-agricultural products Malta favours greater liberalization and a formula-based approach.

I would also like to emphasize the fact that Malta fully supports negotiations on rules in the areas of investment, competition, trade facilitation and transparency in government procurement. We strongly believe that the introduction of rules in these areas would serve to strengthen the overall framework of the international trading system by facilitating the flow of investment, an important generator of economic growth, as well as creating additional trade opportunities.

In view of Malta's accession to the European Union and in line with our objectives to increase national trade competitiveness, I would also like to point out that Malta has embarked upon a process to achieve a higher level of trade facilitation which includes the reduction of unnecessary bureaucracy.

The successful conclusion to this Round forms part of Malta's agenda to enhance trade competitiveness within a context of increasing global economic activity.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the new Member States for their accession to the WTO. We view this development as serving to further strengthen the international trading system and to distribute in an even fashion the benefits which are generated.
