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THAILAND

Statement by H.E. Dr Adisai Bodharamik
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First, let me thank His Excellency, Dr. Luis Derbez Bautista and the Government of Mexico for the warm hospitality and this excellent arrangement. I also would like to thank the Chair of the General Council and the Director-General of the WTO for their efforts in coming up with the draft Ministerial Declaration.

The reason that we are here in Cancún is to set the path for further negotiations under the Doha Development Agenda, leading to its successful conclusion by 1 January 2005, as we agreed in Doha. It is clear that our actions and the results of our meeting this week are being closely watched by the world community. Therefore, it is vital that we increase our cooperation and work together with a sense of mutual understanding and flexibility in order to make this Conference a success.

To do so, we must, first and foremost, admit to the simple reality that the WTO Members do not have the same economic constructs. While the developed Members are evidently more advanced in the manufacturing and services sectors, it is clear that most developing Members are still heavily reliant on the agriculture sector for trade and development.

Accordingly, as a developing Member with half of our population dependent on the agriculture sector for their livelihood, Thailand places the utmost emphasis on the agriculture negotiation and is fully committed to the high level of ambition as mandated in the Doha Declaration. We want a significant reform on all fronts in world agriculture trade.

On market access, high tariffs and tariff peaks must be capped before the application of tariff reduction formula and tariff rate quota volume should be expanded to ensure real market access for agriculture products. There must also be substantial reduction commitment in all trade-distorting domestic support and an end date must also be set for the elimination of all forms of export subsidies. In this respect, Thailand believes that the modality for the agriculture negotiations that will emerge from this Conference should reflect the interests and concerns of all participants. It should also be clear and concise so that there will not be any ambiguities left for interpretation in the negotiations that will follow.

Greater market access in world agriculture trade will expand consumers' choice and elevate consumers' wellbeing in both the developed and developing world. More importantly, substantial reform in agriculture trade will contribute to a freer and fairer global trading environment, which will help to generate higher incomes for developing countries and enhance their efforts to combat poverty.

Thailand, for instance, has set the goal to eradicate poverty by 2008, after which no one will be living below the poverty line. Consequently, we believe that an open and free global trading environment is the essential ingredient to achieve this goal and that agriculture trade is the key to lift income and to sustainable development.

On the Singapore Issues this time around, it needs to be admitted that not all Members are ready for negotiations due to their diverse characteristics. Some may be ready in some areas, such as trade facilitation and transparency in government procurement, but not in others, such as investment and competition policy. This being the case, more time might be needed to ensure full and active participation by all Members. I believe that by linking all of these issues together we are further complicating the negotiations and impeding any decisive actions.

In order to ensure that we will all achieve what we had set out to do at Doha, it is vital that we ensure that everyone here will have a say and a part in the outcome of our deliberations. I do not believe that we can call the WTO the global trade organization if only some members dictate the negotiations, while others are left on the sideline and forced to accept the outcome. We need to work together so that the outcome of our efforts will represent the needs and interests of all Members, large and small, rich and poor.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to welcome the Kingdoms of Cambodia and Nepal to the WTO. Thailand looks forward to working closely with both countries in the near future.
