

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/MIN(03)/ST/41
11 September 2003

(03-4807)

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
Fifth Session
Cancún, 10 - 14 September 2003

Original: English

THE SEPARATE CUSTOMS TERRITORY OF TAIWAN, PENGHU, KINMEN AND MATSU

Statement by H.E. Mr. Lin Yi-fu
Minister of Economic Affairs

It is indeed a great pleasure to lead my delegation from the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu to join all of you in this important gathering. For my delegation, this occasion is particularly gratifying because it took us twelve long years to complete our accession process and this is the first Ministerial Conference my delegation participates with full membership.

Later today, we will be officially adopting the protocols of accession for Nepal and Cambodia. My delegation would like to extend our warmest welcome to the two newest Members of our WTO family, just as all of you did for us two years ago. We endorse the principle of universality of membership in the multilateral trading system. Such universality, moreover, underscores the commitment made by the Trade Minister in 2001, under the Doha Development Agenda, to further liberalize trade, and most of all, to collectively share the prosperity generated with Members of all levels of development, particularly for the developing and least-developed country Members.

The development aspect of our work programme

Development is at the heart of the Doha Agenda. As a newly acceded developing Member, my government has embraced the call stated in paragraph 2 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration "to make positive efforts designed to ensure that developing countries, and especially the least-developed among them, secure a share in the growth or world trade commensurate with the needs of their development."

To translate the vision into action, my government has donated three hundred thousand US dollars (US\$300,000) to the Doha Development Agenda Global Trust Fund during our first year as a Member and we are arranging a second donation this year. In addition, I am pleased to announce that my government is glad to shoulder the responsibility of a developing Member, as called for under the General Council's Decision of 1999 on Preferential Tariff Treatment for Least-Developed Countries, and is adopting new measures to offer duty-free treatment to over 98 per cent of our imports from the LDCs. I would like to welcome more actions and broader participation from my fellow Members to substantiate our goal and commitments made in this aspect.

In addition, I would also like to take this opportunity to commend the critical consensus reached among Members last month that will make it possible for countries in need to have affordable access to life-saving medicines. This remarkable achievement demonstrates that the spirit of "give and take" is very much alive and well in this Organization. To succeed here in Cancún, it is necessary that we summon the same spirit in all other areas of our negotiations.

The negotiation aspect of our work programme

Our mission here in Cancún is to take stock of the progress we made for the past two years after the Doha Ministerial Conference, and to give guidance to our trade negotiators in Geneva to complete the negotiations in accordance with the timeframe we laid down, i.e., by 1 January 2005.

For the WTO to generate deliverables, negotiations must carry on. Twenty-two months have passed since we launched these negotiations in Doha but there is still scepticism about our ability to make progress. However, our efforts in August on the issue of TRIPS Agreement and Public Health have demonstrated clearly that proper solutions can be identified to accommodate different interests.

This Ministerial Conference also serves as a mid-term review and therefore it is vital for us to appreciate the progress we have actually made. By actively participating in the new round of negotiations, Members of all levels of economic development have demonstrated their commitment to the rules-based multilateral trading system. We have conveyed our positions and concerns, and we have also listened carefully to the positions and concerns of others. In the process, we have enhanced mutual understanding, which is indispensable to reaching the final consensus on many issues before us. Therefore, in this Ministerial Conference we, as Ministers, must continue to provide clear guidelines to our colleagues in Geneva so they can succeed in achieving the necessary breakthroughs in the coming months.

Agriculture plays a key role in this Conference. We agreed in Doha to aim at "substantial improvements in market access, reductions of all forms of subsidies and substantial reduction in trade-distorting domestic support". While we should try our best to attain these goals by the deadline of 2005, we should also bear in mind that the Declaration emphasized the importance of non-trade concerns, concepts important to many Members, including ourselves. Therefore, what is at issue now is really how to strike a balance between the two agricultural mandates. Our aim should be to work out a new trade regime that facilitates pragmatic and equitable agricultural reform. The spirit of "give and take" or "*flexibility*" is all that is needed to finish negotiations on every one of the issues before us.

Another complicated area relates to the four Singapore Issues. We would like to emphasize that the result of these negotiations could substantially strengthen the functioning of our trading environment and serve the real needs and interests of every Member participating in the new round of negotiations. Stable and transparent regimes on investment, competition policy, trade facilitation and government procurement can pave the way to smoother transactions for international trade. My delegation is in full support of the commencement of negotiations on the four Singapore Issues. We also believe that negotiations on these four topics can create more room for the "give-and-take" process which, in our view, is a critical element to guarantee the success of the new Round of negotiations.

Let me remind all my fellow Ministers that we have less than half of the three-year period we set for these negotiations left before the deadline. If we are really committed to complete our work as planned, we must take advantage of every resource available over the next year to move the process forward. In particular, every Member must demonstrate sufficient pragmatism and flexibility. The Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu is prepared to do no less.
