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BOLIVIA

Statement Circulated by D. Jorge Crespo Velasco,
Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment

On behalf of the Government of Bolivia and my delegation, I would like to express my gratitude and congratulate the Secretariat of the World Trade Organization for the excellent coordination of the Second Session of the Ministerial Conference. It gives the Bolivian delegation great pleasure to be able to meet with the other Ministers and representatives present here at this juncture in the strengthening of international trade relations.

In commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Multilateral Trading System, which has made it possible to achieve considerable progress in building an increasingly prosperous and liberalized world economy, we would like to highlight the advantages of the open trading system advocated by the WTO in achieving world economic development and making it possible to overcome the inequalities and imbalances in levels of development. We are experiencing a steady growth in international trade which, as one of the driving forces behind economic and social growth, opens up opportunities that we should not ignore.

The Bolivian economy was one of the first in South America to introduce an economic policy of unilateral liberalization and to launch a structural change process based on the free market model. In other words, it introduced a reform process in keeping with the policies set forth in the Global Agenda. The results achieved in this connection and the new opportunities that these measures have opened up permit Bolivia to look to the future with optimism.

The multilateral trading system is providing a framework for increasingly liberalized trade, giving my country growing access to the advantages of the economic model it has introduced and enabling it to make more efficient use of its human and natural resources.

Bolivia has also developed an active policy of economic integration in keeping with its geographical location, encouraging integration in the fields of energy and trade as well as physical integration with a view to consolidating an integrated economic space. Bolivia advocates a form of integration aimed essentially at creating trade flows and does not seek to discriminate against third-country producers; indeed, it supports the WTO disciplines and commitments and clearly adheres to the concept of open integration.

We take part in regional integration agreements in the conviction that by doing so, we are contributing to multilateral trade liberalization efforts. Regional integration along Latin American lines offers trade opportunities that in Latin America have led to an increase in income and employment, and hence to greater prosperity among its peoples.

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In spite of our efforts at opening up our trade, our exports have been affected by trade practices that are unfair, lacking in transparency, and that penalize competitive domestic products. We consider these actions to be contrary to good trade practice. The barriers generally involve the imposition of abusive technical standards on minerals, agricultural goods and textiles. We firmly reject the application of "invisible" trade barriers, particularly since the international community has created appropriate and transparent mechanisms for eliminating "tariff" and "para-tariff" barriers.

We attach particular importance to the effective liberalization of agricultural and textile markets. We reaffirm our demand that the commitments assumed in those sectors be implemented, and we place great hopes in the results of future negotiations, offering our full support for the work being carried out jointly with UNCTAD in the areas of investment and competition.

As regards the future multilateral trade agenda, we fully support the maintenance and search for appropriate mechanisms to ensure the full integration of the developing countries in international trade flows. The WTO can contribute considerably to the prevention of marginalization, and by doing so it would also add to the credibility of the international trading system by ensuring the active participation of all of its Members.

The WTO and other international organizations must redouble and coordinate their technical and financial assistance efforts on behalf of the developing countries. And indeed, Bolivia deplores the decline that has been taking place in international cooperation at a time when national efforts need to be supported.

I repeat that we will spare no effort in seeking a successful conclusion to our discussions and in giving concrete form to the agreements reached, and I would like to thank the Director-General of the WTO for his full support for this Conference as well as the Chairman for the skilful way in which he conducted our work.
