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

Statement circulated by Mr lin Hsin-I
Minister of Economic Affairs

(As an Observer)

On behalf of the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu, I wish to express my deepest appreciation to the Government of Qatar for its generosity in hosting this Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference. Our heartfelt and sincere gratitude also goes to the city of Doha for the excellent arrangements made for this Conference and the fine hospitality extended to all the members of the WTO.

The timing of this Ministerial Conference is opportune and critical. Its outcome will not only provide the impetus for revitalizing the world economy at a time when most of the Members are facing an economic slow-down, but also will set the pace for global trade liberalization in the years to come. This meeting is also of great significance to us because our accession to the WTO has been approved during the course of this Ministerial Conference. I strongly believe that our membership will greatly strengthen the multilateral trading system embodied by the WTO.

It should be noted that since the entry into force of the WTO Agreements on 1 January 1995, a new global environment has emerged and has posed a new challenge to every Member of the WTO. While we should continue to reaffirm the principle and objective as set out in the WTO Agreements, we believe a new work programme for the WTO will be imperative for all the Members to cope with the rapidly changing global trading environment.

We are of the view that the new work programme should entail a broad-based and balanced negotiation agenda. It should be based on the existing Uruguay Round commitments with a view to building a more liberalized trading environment. However, some implementation-related issues should be addressed and the appropriate solutions should be found.

We attach great importance to the continuation of negotiations on goods aimed at reducing tariff and non-tariff trade barriers in order to reach the objective of further liberalization. Nevertheless, in our view, the reduction of tariffs on agricultural products should take into account the characteristics of product and the importance that a country attaches to it. We are also of the opinion that the reduction of tariff escalation and tariff peaks should be adjusted in accordance with the special situations faced by different Members of the WTO.

In addition, we are convinced that the concept and spirit of sustainable development as drawn up in the Marrakesh Agreement should be fully reflected in the process of the negotiations. Efforts in this area could include: ensuring that the negotiations pay due regard to multifunctionality of agriculture, especially to the concerns over food security and environmental protection, and

maintaining policy coherence between WTO measures and multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

Moreover, in view of the fast changing global trading environment, it is becoming increasingly important for us to turn to 'behind-the-border' measures, such as trade-related competition and investment policies. Despite the fact that these issues are complex, we should work towards addressing these issues through a more flexible and pragmatic approach, in order to develop a free and fair competition environment for the world trade.

We fully understand that encouraging developing and least-developed countries to actively participate in the new work programme is one of the most important factors that will ensure the success of the multilateral trading system. In view of this, the WTO and the other international agencies have offered a range of capacity building and technical assistance programmes. Although we are not yet a full member of the WTO, I am pleased to report to you that we have already provided funding to two activities organized by the WTO, both of which are aimed at facilitating the integration of developing and least-developed countries into the multilateral trading system. It should be noted that after our accession, we also plan to provide tariff-free treatment for certain products originating from the least-developed countries to improve their market access opportunities.

We are facing a world economy in which the challenges and opportunities are both new and unprecedented. We strongly believe that the WTO, the vanguard of the multilateral trading system, has now a vital role to play in unifying all the WTO Members to approve the new work programme before us so as to move the world economy forward. As one of the new Members of the WTO, we look forward to the opportunity to work side by side with all the WTO Members to contribute to the success of the multilateral trading system and to create a better world.
