

# WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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## SWITZERLAND

Statement by H.E. Mr Pascal Couchepin  
Federal Counsellor for Economy

The Doha Conference is evidence not only of our intention to strengthen the multilateral trading system, but also our willingness to achieve greater integration of the Middle East within our Organization by the accession of several of its States in the near future. The WTO will not accomplish its mission as a universal organization unless this part of the world, the political, economic and commercial roles of which are undisputed and gaining increasing significance, is strongly represented. The WTO makes it possible for all of its Members, irrespective of size and strength, to play a part in shaping the multilateral system and to defend their interests on the basis of law.

I should like to convey our sincere thanks to the Qatari authorities for their warm welcome and the excellent work in preparing for this important meeting.

A successful outcome to our work would help to improve confidence as between Members and the public. The growth of world trade has, for several decades, greatly exceeded that of our national economies; the forecasts for this year, however, show that such levels can be sustained only by adapting the multilateral trading system to the current changes.

The problems of integrating developing and transition countries into the global economy, as already noted in Seattle, have unfortunately been confirmed. I should once again like to emphasize that the solution to this problem lies in greater consistency between national and international economic policies in the commercial, financial and monetary spheres. This is a prerequisite for any successful development strategy.

Lastly, the impact of structural changes on individuals and communities has become a source of great concern, undermining the consensus in our societies in favour of an open trading system. The answer to these concerns is to adapt the system to the new economic and social realities. During this Conference, we shall endeavour to lay the foundations for such action. Switzerland is firmly resolved to make a full contribution to this major undertaking.

Switzerland sees three fields for action in the days to come:

First, major headway as regards agriculture is possible only with progress in areas indirectly linked to this sector, namely the environment, geographical indications and rules. These negotiations must result in instruments which favour trade, producers, consumers and the environment.

Second, no one can fail to be moved by the public health crises and the ravages caused by pandemics such as AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. Far-reaching efforts to strengthen health infrastructures and medicine distribution networks and to step up preventive action are required to

combat these scourges effectively. Ensuring the protection of intellectual property pursuant to the TRIPS Agreement is also essential and will encourage research into and development of new drugs and therapies which meet the needs of all Members, whether they are industrialized or developing countries. Switzerland is ready to contribute to this vast effort and to use the flexibility of the Agreement on intellectual property in order to guarantee access to medicines for the poorest countries.

Third, it is essential for suitable instruments to be created worldwide for both investment and competition so as to ensure a stable, predictable and coherent framework for economic operators and governments.

Furthermore, it is vital for all partners concerned to join forces in the major work on the social dimension and globalization currently being done by the ILO. It is therefore only natural for the WTO Secretariat to be actively involved.

Developing and transition countries and especially the least-developed countries stand in need of effective support to benefit from the multilateral trading system. This means, in particular, helping the least-developed countries to play an active role in the work of the WTO. This is the task of Switzerland's Agency for International Trade Information and Cooperation (AITIC) which was set up in 1998. We would be very happy to have the support of other partners in backing this initiative.

The Swiss delegation is pleased to cooperate actively over the next few days to make sure that the Doha Conference is a success.

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