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SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Statement Circulated by H.E. Mr Peter Brno
State Secretary of the Ministry of Economy

On behalf of the Slovak Republic I would like to thank His Highness the Emir Hamad Al Khalifa Al Thani and the Government of Qatar for hosting the Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference and the possibility to visit the charming city of Doha.

Today, we are standing at the very important juncture not only for the multilateral trading system but also for the future economic growth around the world. We all gathered here with the common aim to take important decisions. Bold actions are needed in order to achieve a turnover of the current negative development in the global economy and in order to stimulate further sustainable development. This need is even more acute in the light of the latest serious events. Despite deep shock and sadness it is imperative to persevere and to continue in our everyday lives in order to build a better future for all.

Historical experiences shows us that international trade greatly contributed to the sustainable development. We witnessed great changes in overall trading environment and structure. Crucial role in this process has been played by the rules-based system of the World Trade Organization, establishing a framework for multilateral trade relations. In this context our efforts should be concentrated on further enhancement of interaction between trading system and national economies. Through this process we can better address the issue of how to improve participation of countries at different levels of development into the multilateral trading system and how to ensure better distribution of positive effects of trade liberalization among these countries.

We believe that the most appropriate response to these challenges will be a launch of the new round. Its agenda should be balanced, aimed at further improvement of the market access for goods and services, further enhancement and strengthening of trade rules as well as other trade related issues.

We hope that a new round will not only help to narrow differences still existing among the trade policy regimes of the WTO Members but will also contribute to well organized and balanced multilateral trading system better equipped to deal with challenges of the global economy.

In order to have a successful new round, leading to results mutually accepted by all, we strongly support open and transparent method of work, applied during the negotiations. Only by open and transparent dialogue among WTO Member countries will we be able to achieve a better understanding how to tackle problems we are facing.

We would like to reiterate our support for better integration of developing countries, and in particular least-developed countries, into the multilateral trading system. We fully recognize the importance of the implementation issues to be properly reflected in our decision.

The Slovak Republic traditionally pursued very open and liberal trading regime, where foreign trade plays a very important role in our national economy. This is the main reason why we strongly support the strengthening of the WTO multilateral trading system of rules, promoting further liberalization of trade, addressing the deepening of interfaces between trade and related issues and policies in the framework of the new round.

In the area of further liberalization of market access agriculture belongs to key issues where we have to find consensus acceptable to each of us. We are fully committed to achieve goals of the Agreement on Agriculture. In the process of liberalization it is very important not to overlook difficulties of countries transforming their agriculture sectors into fully fledged market economy. In this context we would like to point out the need to appropriately reflect the experiences and effects of implementing reduction commitments, as well as non-trade concerns given by the specificity of the agriculture sector. Improved market access, as well as a substantial reduction of all forms of support, is a vital interest to us.

Further market access liberalization will not be complete without further liberalization of non-agricultural products. In this process the product coverage should be comprehensive, without a priori exemptions and aimed at a substantial reduction of tariffs, to achieve an improved balanced overall market access. The Slovak Republic is convinced that this goal can be reached through tariff harmonization, elimination of tariff peaks and reduced tariff escalation. It is also necessary to reduce the scope of non-tariff barriers having a restrictive or distorting impact on trade.

Alongside the liberalization in the area of market access for goods we attach great importance to further liberalization of the trade in services. We are encouraged by the work already undertaken in negotiations under Article XIX of the GATS and we also recognize that there still exist wide range of issues to be solved related to sectors, horizontal issues as well as new rules in the area of safeguards in trade in services. We would like to reiterate our full support to continuation of the negotiation process in which the benefits of autonomous liberalization will be appropriately taken into account.

In promoting sustainable development we observe the growing importance of trade and environment policies carried out in mutually supportive way. Environmental considerations should be taken into account through the whole process of the future negotiations in the framework of the new round.

We believe that negotiations on further liberalization of the market access should be supported by the launch of negotiations in the area of Singapore issues - trade and investment, competition, transparency in government procurement and trade facilitation, focused on establishing multilateral framework of rules in this area.

We also support commencing of the analytical work focused on issues relating to the trade of small economies, trade, debt and finance and trade and transfer of technology as well as continuation of the Work Programme on Electronic Commerce. We believe that these issues are important elements for fuller participation of the WTO Members in the multilateral trading system.

In conclusion, we are of the view that at this Ministerial Conference we should exercise our joint responsibility, political wisdom, pragmatism and determination to achieve successful conclusion which will be resulting in further strengthening and improvement of the multilateral trading system and bringing benefits to all Member countries. My delegation is determined to work effectively in order to achieve this goal.

Finally, let me welcome the People's Republic of China and Chinese Taipei into the WTO family.
