

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/MIN(01)/ST/5
10 November 2001

(01-5581)

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
Fourth Session
Doha, 9 - 13 November 2001

Original: English

BELGIUM
ON BEHALF OF THE PRESIDENCY OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION

Statement by H.E. Mrs. Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck,
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs

Let me first of all thank His Highness the Emir Hamad Al Khalifa Al Thani and the people of Qatar for their hospitality on the occasion of the Fourth Ministerial Conference of the WTO.

I am very glad that this meeting takes place in Doha. Indeed, since the early times of humanity, the Middle East has played a pivotal role in the exchange between civilizations. Trade has been essential to this process through mutual respect and recognition, and still is.

At a time when international understanding is more than ever necessary and on the background of a looming recession, this Conference has to give a clear signal to the world: we should work together and react to economic slowdown not by protectionism but by further stimulating trade flows.

I strongly believe that the launching of a broad and balanced trade round will meet the pressing challenge of building a more equitable and prosperous world.

Indeed, trade is about more than just exchanging goods and services. Trade is a contribution to stability and peace, when it takes into account the special needs of the developing countries and when the legitimate aspirations and concerns of our societies are being addressed.

The multilateral framework of the WTO is a guarantee that the interests of all the participants in international trade, whatever their sized, are taken into account.

As we intend to take on board the needs of our partners, especially those of the developing countries, we also expect our concerns to be considered in a spirit of mutual trust and benefit.

We attach great importance for the developing countries, stricken by epidemics, to benefit from the flexibility existing in the TRIPS Agreement as regards the access to medicines essential to the treatment of those diseases.

We support further preferential and enhanced market access for our developing partners, accompanied with strengthened capacity building measures.

Without restating what has just been expressed by Commissioner Lamy, I want to emphasize the European Union's strong interest to both the social and environmental dimensions of trade; without impinging on the work done by other organizations, we cannot ignore the wider implications of the exchange of goods and services; the European Union therefore supports the work in the ILO on

social aspects of globalization and feels it necessary to associate the WTO to that process in the view of a better understanding of the issues involved.

We all want to ensure that an open and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system and the promotion of sustainable development are indeed mutually supportive; we therefore think there is a need to clarify WTO rules, while providing adequate safeguard against protectionism.

We also believe that further market access should be accompanied by clarifying, updating and developing the rules. We believe now is the time to initiate a process leading to negotiations on sound rules in investment and competition.

As for Agriculture, you know that this activity is of great importance and sensitivity to the European Union as well as to many other countries. I refer to our position clearly stated by the Commissioner.

The European Union welcomes the accession of China and Chinese Taipei to the WTO as a major step in reinforcing the universal character of the Organization. The world as a whole will benefit from these accessions.

Together, we must all assess our priorities and show the necessary flexibility to make sure that every one can return home at the end of this meeting with a result reflecting the mutual gains of fruitful negotiations.

More than ever, this Conference that brings us together in Doha must contribute to a closer world community.

It is with this spirit that the European Union has come to Doha.
