

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/MIN(03)/ST/150
13 September 2003

(03-4930)

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
Fifth Session
Cancún, 10 - 14 September 2003

Original: English

SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

Statement by H.E. Mr. Goran Pitíc
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(Speaking as an Observer)

First of all, let me express, on behalf of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, my gratitude to the Government of Mexico for the warm hospitality and for outstanding efforts to have a well-organized Conference of such far-reaching significance. I also wish to extend our thanks to the Secretariat of the World Trade Organization and to the Mexican Organizing Committee for the invitation to participate and to address this Conference.

As everybody else at this Conference and across the globe, we are all awaiting with great interest and expectations the outcome of this meeting. Governments participating in an increasingly interdependent and integrated world should make best endeavours that all countries, more and less developed alike, benefit from the progress of the development. To successfully and timely conclude the Doha Development Agenda is to create conditions for more balanced growth and development so that UN Millennium Development Goals may also be realized. Significant agreement on TRIPS and public health is reason for hope that similar progress is possible in other areas of particular interest to developing countries, as well as to the integration of all in the world trade and development. In this context, we look at a new round of multilateral trade negotiations launched in Doha on the Fourth Ministerial Conference in November 2001, as an event of high priority. At the same time, we expect from the Fifth Ministerial Conference, here in Cancún, to resolve open problems and to enable necessary compromises, so that the balanced set of results is reached and the interest of all fulfilled in an acceptable degree. Therefore, our special interest is to achieve a balanced resolution in further liberalization in the fields of agriculture and services.

Serbia and Montenegro, the two States of the newly established Union, are prepared to fulfil all conditions necessary to become, both of them and individually, equal Members of WTO, in accordance with the regulations and the practice of the Organization. They are resolved to enter into negotiations that will, hopefully, start soon, and to meet the requirements necessary for WTO.

Let me point out that Serbia and Montenegro made, during the previous year, a very significant step forward in resolution of the institutional arrangements between constituting States, and both of them undertook important and far-reaching economic reforms. The agreement of the two States on the harmonization of the two economic systems has been reached with specific aims and dynamics set. The WTO Member countries will be informed on all details on the first meeting of the working party for the accession of Serbia and Montenegro to the WTO. We expect that the first working party meeting will result in qualitative step towards the resolution of this issue.

We want to stress that both economic systems in Member States have a common main feature: significant degree of liberalization of foreign trade regimes and maintenance exclusively of

those measures that are in accordance with the rules and regulations of the WTO. What is important for us to emphasize is that those are liberalization measures autonomously taken. Consequently, we look with special interest how the decisions on the treatment of such measures are taken in a new round.

For Serbia and Montenegro, as a small economy in transition, an especially important issue is regional cooperation and trade liberalization, via the mechanisms of the stability pact for south-eastern Europe and the working group for trade liberalization and facilitation. Under its auspices, the negotiations and conclusion of free-trade agreements took place, with an aim of creation of a virtually free-trade zone within the region of south-east Europe. Together with the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU as one of priorities of the S&M, we consider the whole process of regional cooperation as complementary to the multilateral liberalization within the WTO. That is exactly the main reason why we support multilateral liberalization based on rights, obligations and well-balanced interests in the overall package within the WTO, as best quality liberalization. That fact makes us think that it is not only the interest for Serbia and Montenegro, but quite wider, to include all countries from this region as soon as possible into the multilateral trade system. The principle of universal coverage would be respected and the economies of Members would get a chance to stabilize on predictable premises of global economy.

Finally, let me conclude by statement that Serbia and Montenegro fully support the effort of Member countries to resolve open questions in the Draft Ministerial Declaration and adopt it as a good basis for negotiations on one well-balanced package of results. As all other negotiators, Serbia and Montenegro will follow with special interest the fields that are of its priority, with the hope that, during our process of accession to the WTO, we would be in a position to realize our specific interest as to help the fulfilment of aims of development and growth of economy in Serbia and Montenegro.
