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SLOVENIA

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At the occasion of this second session of the World Trade Organization's Ministerial Conference and the celebration of the establishment of the Multilateral Trading System, it is appropriate by the Ministers to reaffirm, as they have done in Singapore, the role of the World Trade Organization as the specially structured organization to deal with issues of world trade and to carry us into the 21st Century on the basis of an ambitious future agenda.

Members in the WTO should further expand trade rules in key areas of international commerce. As the only forum for multilateral negotiations, the WTO must maintain the momentum for progressive trade liberalization within a rule-based system. In the process of doing so the WTO should proceed in a balanced manner. The Republic of Slovenia strongly supports the need to intensify efforts to ensure that all aspects of WTO work contribute to the objectives of sustainable development.

In furthering its work, the WTO should operate in a transparent way, facilitate trade and through its Members work towards the abolishment of discriminatory restrictions and regulatory practices, ensure accordance of effective national treatment, at the border and internally. Transparency should be recognized as the key issue. Through transparency of their policies and their work in the WTO, Members should enable the strengthening of public confidence in the Multilateral Trading System. A significant rise in public confidence is crucial for the future of the system. Members should keep in mind, that during the exercise of their legitimate WTO rights, they should also be able to respond to the interests and concerns of all its Members.

Conscious of the fact that implementation of the achieved results of negotiations is an important issue and conscious of the fact that there is an array of other issues which are in the interest of all Members, some of which are of critical importance for the effective functioning of the Multilateral Trading System, the Republic of Slovenia supports the establishment of a broad-based process among the WTO Members under the auspices of the General Council, with the aim of a comprehensive trade liberalization negotiation, beginning in the latter half of 1999. This would encompass the built-in agenda and key areas of commerce, such as investment, competition policy, services, labour standards and other interests within the agreed scope and modalities. The Republic of Slovenia supports an early start of the preparatory work for the third session of the Ministerial Conference that is, at least by September 1998.

The Republic of Slovenia recognizes the primacy of the multilateral trading system which includes the framework for the development of regional trade which is complimentary to it. The processes of regional integration are of great importance to Slovenia as a small economy, in particular, the process

of European integration. Increasing integration of economies facilitates trade liberalization. Therefore, processes of global and regional trade liberalization should be mutually supportive in the framework of a rule-based multilateral trading system.

Believing that it is essential that trading nations should be Members of the WTO, whether large or small, Slovenia attaches great importance to the accession of new countries. In the process of integration into the Multilateral Trading System, new entrants should make enforceable commitments in the area of market access, adherence to the WTO rules and make other meaningful commitments in order to maintain the fabric of the Multilateral Trading System in the future.

In some other commercially important areas to be considered in the WTO such as government procurement, investment, competition policies, trade facilitation, measures for the protection of the environment, etc. the Republic of Slovenia is strongly in favour of achieving maximum possibilities to ensure transparency of policies and practices, and to develop transparency agreements in the WTO. In other words, clear and effective procedures should be developed to secure information on national legislation, procedures and procedural requirements in the mentioned areas, information on practices and opportunities, as well as to secure the right of access to this information. Part of the transparency exercise should also be the transparency of decision-making. This would encourage open and competitive regimes specific to each area.

On Global Electronic Commerce, the Republic of Slovenia supports the establishment of a comprehensive work programme covering trade-related issues under the auspices of the General Council with the aim to produce recommendations for consideration at the third session of the Ministerial Conference.

The WTO has a very positive track record of important achievements. It is binding nations and their economies closer together on the basis of mutually beneficial economic interests. Members should therefore maintain these achievements and develop the concept of open-endedness. Multilateral liberalization is presently the most effective way to overcome economic pressures and crises. The essence of this global process should be communicated to the wider public more effectively, so that the dimensions of raising standards of living worldwide, of providing a more stable and secure climate in international relations is better understood.
