

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/MIN(99)/ST/23
1 December 1999

(99-5219)

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
Third Session
Seattle, 30 November - 3 December 1999

Original: English

GERMANY

Statement by H.E. Dr. Werner Müller, Federal Minister of Economics and Technology

The decisions we take at this WTO Ministerial Conference will determine the course of international trade policy into the next millennium.

Seattle is an outward looking city, and it is my hope that this city will inspire us to press firmly ahead with global trade liberalization.

I thank President Clinton, the entire US administration and of course yourself, Madam Chair, for organizing this conference.

We are indeed standing at an important crossroads: it is in our power to continue the success story of the GATT and the WTO – a success story which has lasted for more than fifty years – with a new, comprehensive round of negotiations on international trade liberalization.

We would be ducking the challenge if we were to restrict negotiations to the built-in agenda.

Germany's view is therefore clear: together with our partners in the EU, we call for a new round from January 2000 in which no trade-related issue is excluded from the start.

Allow me to justify the stance taken by Germany.

1. Our experience in Germany of resolute market opening has been extremely positive. This approach to economic policy was a vital driving force behind Germany's so-called economic miracle after 1945.

We can expect that a further reduction in tariffs, and other trade barriers and a strengthening of the multilateral WTO rules will create a fresh stimulus for business, growth and jobs, not only in the industrial countries, but in all countries.

2. Another argument in favour of a new round covering all trade-related issues is this: only a sufficiently broad approach will permit an overall solution with a balanced outcome for all – and I emphasize the word "all" – sides.

3. Only a broad mandate for negotiations can answer the ever more urgent question about the relationship between trade policy and other policy fields.

Examples are: investment, competition, environment, health, consumer protection, and labour and social standards.

We therefore need to negotiate rules affecting more than just trade policy in the WTO framework.

That is the only way to avoid a return to protectionism and unilateralism in the long term. That is the only way to ensure both the stability of the multilateral trading system and sustainable economic growth for all WTO Members.

4. One important German objective in a new round is to get the developing countries – and particularly the least developed ones – more integrated into the multilateral trading system.

A decisive role here will be played by improved access for products from the developing countries to the markets of the industrialized world.

A new round will also enable us to deal with specific problems that the developing countries have with the implementation of the existing agreements, including a fine-tuning of the rules on "Special and Differential Treatment".

Our comprehensive approach to the negotiations is ambitious, particularly in view of the fact that we would like the Round to be finished within three years.

But many of the so-called New Issues have long been the subject of discussion in the WTO.

The basic preparatory work and studies have already been done in the WTO on all of these issues.

It is now important to draw the correct conclusions for policy from these discussions and to adopt appropriate mandates for negotiation.

An expansion of WTO rules in these fields is not least in the interest of the smaller trading partners and the developing countries, since they give them legal certainty, greater protection against unilateral measures, and thus additional strength.

One final point, Madam Chair, about the so-called "deliverables".

We should use this conference to wrap up a smaller package resolving some priority issues.

Germany is therefore aiming at a ministerial decision on making the work of the WTO more transparent for the civil society.

But in particular, we are proposing a ministerial decision in line with the EU initiative, whereby all industrial countries and, if possible, advanced developing countries make a pledge to the least developed countries to allow tariff-free access for essentially all products from 2003.

Madam Chair, colleagues, we all share a common responsibility for making the third WTO Ministerial Conference a success.

This conference, this city, must give a signal to the world economy that a new round, the Seattle Millennium Round, is being launched.

In this round, we will have to face up to our responsibility for sustainable development and for the social aspects of trade.

That is the signal – and no less than that – which our constituencies and the international business community expect from us.
