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FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Statement by H.E. Mr. Nikola Gruevski Minister of Trade

Allow me, at the outset, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia to express our gratitude to the Government of the United States of America, the WTO Secretariat, the City of Seattle and to the participants for their strenuous efforts to launch a new round of negotiations in building a global economy that will promote open trade and prosperity and lift the standard of living and the quality of life for people throughout the world. This is a historic event and should truly result in a round of common vision, hopes, economic prosperity, jobs and development.

We fully recognize the strivings directed towards ensuring an open, fair and dynamic multilateral trade system as the basis for global economic environment beneficial to growth, economic and social development.

In today's reality of globalized, rapidly changing and interdependent world, the Republic of Macedonia considers the further development of the open market economy amongst the fundamental objectives of its economic reforms. In the last years the process of comprehensive reform undertakings in the economic and political system pursue a very intensive pace under the guiding principles of democracy, political pluralism, respect for the human rights and freedoms, ethics of civil society and the rule of law. Within this policy framework, my Government is committed to strengthening of economic stability and implementation of structural economic reforms with the ultimate objective to create efficient economic capacity for a sustained economic growth.

The Macedonian economy still struggles to overcome the deep decline and negative lasting consequences of the long political turmoil in the region. Further persistent efforts are ahead and the assistance from outside is crucial. We are strongly determined to create stable conditions to attract foreign investment.

In the area of domestic trade regulation the new legal regime creates a framework for modern and dynamic trade relations. Although at the onset the adjustment of the national economy to the conditions and requirements of the world market is a difficult task, it is the only way of attaining a sustainable economic growth and development.

Taking into consideration that in the present stage regional trade cooperation is a building block of the global multilateral trading system we have undertaken several activities in that area. We attach great importance to our negotiations with the European Union, which is our main trading partner, we are also in an advanced stage of negotiations with EFTA, and we have concluded a number of bilateral trade agreements with countries in the region aimed at intensifying the economic and trade relations. We are enhancing our trade relations with other important trading partners, to which, after becoming a WTO Member, the multilateral framework will add further significant impetus.

The Macedonian Government, in this perspective, attaches great importance to our accession to the World Trade Organization and endeavours to complete it as soon as possible. The Republic of Macedonia builds its position in international economic relations by observing international principles and standards. Although not yet a World Trade Organization Member, we respect the basic GATT principles which became part of WTO regulations, and they are an integral part of our legislation. Furthermore, we have extended and introduced comprehensive legal changes to cover all areas involved in the accession process. We have submitted the Memorandum for accession in July 1996. The Memorandum has been circulated in April 1999. We have undertaken intense preparations, and we look forward to holding the first meeting of the working party very soon.

We believe in the universal character of the World Trade Organization and the multilateral system which will enable growth of the world trade, investments and possibilities for new jobs and rise in living standards. In this context, we recognize the historic significance of the Seattle Conference, to further develop and strengthen the rule-based, open, fair and dynamic multilateral system. We are determined to take part in the new round of negotiations and committed to further contributions to the strengthening of the multilateral trade system conducive to growth and development.
