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## ARGENTINA

Statement by H.E. Mr Alfredo Vicente Chiaradia  
Ambassador, Foreign Trade Representative

I should like on behalf of the Argentine Republic to thank the Government and the people of Qatar for their warm hospitality and to congratulate you Mr. Chairman on your election, which we are certain will contribute to the success of this Fourth Ministerial Conference of the WTO.

Allow me also to extend a warm welcome to the new Members of our Organization, and in particular to the People's Republic of China, because of its important presence in world production and trade.

This Conference is being held in a complex international context, at both the political and economic levels. The great slowdown in growth and the sharp reduction in the expansion of international trade are now made worse by the impact and the repercussions of the terrorist attack of 11 September, which has been condemned by the international community. This situation compels us to face up even more to the responsibility of the task of continuing the process of trade liberalization.

In this respect, while we share the view that by expanding trade we will be able to reverse some major difficulties like those mentioned, we consider that this will be so only to the extent that the benefits that emerge from our negotiations will be shared by everyone and will serve to offset the inequities that still exist in the international trading system.

The possibility of access to major markets is a crucial element at a time when, for many emerging countries, the flow of capital is changing direction, and international trade is becoming the only realistic source of obtaining foreign exchange.

Despite the existence of great constraints, Argentina stands ready to continue towards an open, free trade-oriented economy. We regard the negotiations we are conducting in various contexts – regional and multilateral – not as an end in themselves but as elements in the service of the objective of fostering the well-being and equity of our society.

We also wish to emphasize in this forum the priority that Argentina attaches to MERCOSUR as an integration project that goes beyond the economic and the commercial and represents a shared endeavour at open regionalism fully consistent with the multilateral system.

Allow me to put forward some considerations on my country's expectations at the outset of this important Ministerial Conference.

More than six years have gone by since we established the WTO and experience at this stage shows today that the results have not been what we expected. For example:

- Many measures to favour development are encountering implementation difficulties;
- broad areas of international trade are still subject to regimes that cannot be described as free trade; and, even more worrisome is that,
- many proposals submitted for this meeting – which would be legitimate if the results of the Uruguay Round had been more balanced – seem to move more towards limiting, regulating and restricting trade rather than favouring it.

We must take advantage of the opportunity afforded to us by this Conference to redirect this process and integrate all countries into a fair and balanced trading system.

In this context, particularly notable is the inequity in the agricultural sector, where, despite the commitments undertaken, the developed countries are subsidizing and protecting production and trade at higher levels than at the end of the Uruguay Round.

Inasmuch as the multilateral rules on agriculture are not on an equal footing with those for the rest of trade in goods, this will continue to create a vicious circle of subsidies, giving rise to overproduction, which in turn causes prices to fall and, ultimately, leads to further protection measures. This must be broken; otherwise, the very viability of the system will be placed at risk.

Also, for similar reasons, we will reject the acceptance of further commitments on such topics as the environment and geographical indications, where an underhand attempt is being made to introduce new and more pernicious restrictions on such trade.

As to intellectual property, the interests of the innovation-related sectors must be reconciled with the needs of consumers, with the developing world being viewed in its entirety and the health problem as a whole. We also support continued progressive liberalization in services and we are ready to contribute to the work on new topics in the context of a balanced global agenda.

We are taking part in this meeting in a spirit of commitment to the multilateral rules and to the institution that administers them. We want to reach agreements that will make for a more thorough process of trade liberalization, but we also want to establish a more equitable system of rules for all participants.

We hope that in these four days of work we can lay the foundations to bring about a multilateral trading system that will effectively help to reduce the growing gap of inequality between our countries.

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