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SLOVENIA

Statement by H.E. Mr. Marjan Senjur, Minister for Economic Relations and Development

At the outset, allow me to express my appreciation to the government of the United States of America, the State of Washington and the City of Seattle, for the organization of this, the third, meeting of ministers and their hospitality and would like to add my government's wishes for their continued prosperity.

This Conference will apparently be an event of some significance for various reasons. Among them is the fact that we are facing the 21st century and the future. It will also be known for its main objective to launch a new round of multilateral trade negotiations and hopefully for a number of other achievements. Our purpose here is to adopt an important Declaration and a number of decisions which will set out the World Trade Organisation's work programme for the coming years. Perhaps we, the ministers, will be able to break new ground in the area of investment, competition policy, trade facilitation, and in addressing development and environmental concerns. After all the WTO is about cooperation between countries over economic policies and rule-making. If we come to an agreement in Seattle, the progress can be broad and vigorous.

Different levels of economic development in the world today are a matter of fact.

The multilateral trading system could serve as a continuous force for economic growth, even more if the *coherency mandate* would be fully exploited. The WTO could play a significant role in what is sometimes called "a new world architecture", together with institutions like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the International Labour Organisation. The WTO needs to engage more in issues of international concern and the public debate what the international community needs to do in times of crises and how to counteract protectionism. We need a "millennium" model of economic development that would balance economic efficiency and social justice.

Decisions will greatly influence the future work of smaller delegations and their country's administrations. Decisions will have to be made how to provide the resources that will be necessary in order to participate actively in the coming negotiations. It will be important to every delegation, and the government it represents, to know and understand what the final outcome of this meeting will be, that is, to know what it is agreeing to and to understand the implications of the agreed negotiating agenda. Therefore, we need to converge our positions, align our objectives, decide on a number of options, create a solid basis for the work to come and engage our governments in a process of preparation, to invest the necessary time and effort in order to implement the final outcome. This must necessarily be a collective commitment of the ministers.

I would like to draw attention to a few points which, in my view are significant, but that is not to say that other numerous issues that have been discussed and have emerged in the course of WTO's work do not have significance. In the time permitted, it is just not possible to touch on the broad scale of questions that exist in today's international trade and economic relations.

Permit me to address the question of *implementation of agreements*. In this area there is a number of issues which cannot be avoided but an adequate response must be found also for the sake of securing compliance with agreements. Compliance with WTO agreements and observance of agreed rules of the multilateral trading system must be a clear obligation of *all* Members of the World Trade Organization. A strong WTO is especially important to small, trade-oriented countries like Slovenia. We need the world economy to be governed by rules, not by power. We also must not ignore the issues of abusive trade practices and application of agreements, such as in the area of anti-dumping. The WTO's strength will depend on respect for its rules and rulings in dispute settlement, but also whether its Members will feel that the basis of the organization is *mutual*, not one-sided, interest. However, implementation issues cannot go beyond realistic proportions which would inhibit the advancement into new areas of agreement. We are here to see what rules can make our intentions materialize and to ensure important gains that are to be made by the dismantling of obstacles of trade.

Rules promote trade. They provide *stability and predictability* and allow business people to take risks across national borders. For reasons of stability we need to include the many economies, large and small, that remain outside the rule-based multilateral trading system. Many have gone through serious economic hardship for a variety of reasons, some due to costly and devastating conflict. By gradually drawing these economies into channels of normal economic coexistence and the world of opportunity, by aiding them through the accession process to the World Trade Organisation, their reforms and the development of fully-fledged market economies can contribute to a safer, more predictable and stable world. Slovenia has a vested interest in the stability of South-East Europe and the reconstruction of the devastated economies, the reestablishment of trade and economic cooperation. Slovenia is able and prepared to do its part to make this possible.

Regarding *comprehensiveness and the single undertaking* of the new round: the existence of divergent needs is a fact. It is also a fact that there are *mutual* interests. Every Member may have its own priorities of national importance. For Slovenia this may be the need to maintain flexible domestic support programmes due to a very specific nature of its agriculture. That is to say, in this respect our national priorities are clear. Slovenia can accept the mandate of Article 20 of the Agreement on Agriculture, including comprehensive market access negotiations. However, non-trade concerns must be taken into account and these include the multifunctional role of agriculture. Sustaining and developing rural communities, environmental protection and food safety, are essential ingredients of Slovenia's economic policies. We can only hope, because we are working in a multilateral framework, that the negotiations we are to launch will not become hostage to narrow interests and that flexibility and compromise will be the order of the day. Sufficient understanding will be necessary for the accommodation of some special needs. Without it, it would be difficult to imagine how the challenge of achieving good results in the new round could be met. After all, our governments and parliaments will have to approve these results. The potential of international negotiations and rule-making is still vast and it indeed speaks for a comprehensive approach to the forthcoming negotiations.

In order to advance the negotiations, Slovenia can subscribe to the application of early agreements on a provisional basis. It can also subscribe to liberalisation initiatives provided that taking these on board would be formally recognized as a contribution to the final package of the new round.

Slovenia can support the opening of new opportunities by expanding the multilateral coverage in the World Trade Organization to investment, competition policies, transparency in government procurement and trade facilitation, by adoption of multilaterally binding principles.

There are many issues in current international trade relations that are sources of friction and may affect us all. Members of the World Trade Organization most certainly can and should find ways measures, standards of food safety and the high costs of adjustment to technical and other standards. Whether Members will be able to deal with highly-charged concerns of public health and welfare, or

not, may affect public perceptions of how the World Trade Organization works and whether indeed it is conscious of these concerns. In this context the needs of consumer protection should not be set aside but integrated into appropriate policies in all areas. There are other concerns of a truly global nature, such as allowing the developing countries and especially least developed among them to fully materialize their comparative advantages and compete in the international markets. We believe that many of the concerns will not be casualties of the advancement of global trade but will find their place under the cloak of mutual interest.

Allow me to conclude with a few words about Slovenia's view on electronic commerce. This is an area of immeasurable potential and opportunity that can be shared by all, under conditions of unimpeded growth. In particular, it holds most promise for smaller economic operators who can increase their horizon of business activity beyond their size and means regardless of time and distance. This is an area of rapid technological advancement which calls for a binding commitment to a secure environment in which electronic commerce can flourish. This tool of progress should be governed by multilateral principles and WTO rules. However, the need for consumer protection in this development should be taken into full account.

Slovenia is looking forward to the challenges of a new round of negotiations, although, for a small country with limited resources, it will be a monumental task to take an active part. Nevertheless, Slovenia will do its utmost to contribute to a successful conclusion of the negotiations.
