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## IRELAND

Statement by H.E. Mr Michael Ahern  
Minister for International Trade and Commerce

I would like to join with other delegations in thanking the Government of Mexico for hosting this Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization here in the beautiful surroundings of Cancún. I would also wish to commend the superb organizational arrangements which have been put in place.

A successful outcome to our meeting is vitally important for the multilateral trading system and for the continued capacity of the WTO itself to contribute to world economic development and growth. At this meeting we must reconfirm, through the decisions we take, our determination to meet the ambitious objectives to which we committed ourselves in Doha.

Progress towards achieving the aims of the Doha Development Agenda over the past two years has been slow. This is hardly surprising as our agenda addresses issues of sensitivity for us all. The achievement, of our common goals will require all Members to demonstrate vision, flexibility and commitment. If we are to achieve our target date for reaching agreement, this meeting must reinvigorate our negotiating process.

Ireland, as a member of the European Union, subscribes fully to the EU's designation of the Doha Development Agenda as the Union's number one trade policy priority. Central to our approach, and that of the European Union, is strong support for continued liberalization and an effective multilateral trading system under the direction of the WTO and a strong commitment to respond to the concerns and ambitions of developing countries. We welcome the agreement that has been reached on access to medicines. We must add to it by putting in place a framework for effective responses across the range of development issues.

For Ireland, trade has been a key stimulant of our economic growth. Delivering on the commitments entered into at Cancún means ensuring an outcome that has the potential to deliver increased prosperity for all Members of this Organization. Over the past four decades Irish trade in goods and services has grown from, 80 per cent to 180 per cent of GDP. Ireland's economic development would not have been possible without the existence of an open multilateral trading system with fair, transparent and predictable rules. By strengthening the present system we can lay the foundation stone for the future economic prosperity of all - developed and developing countries alike.

The issues are well set out in the Draft Ministerial Text that was presented to us at the outset of this meeting. We need to make progress on them. We want to advance market access, agriculture, non-agricultural products and services issues. We want the WTO to engage in real work in the

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interests of all its Members on investment, trade facilitation, government procurement and competition. We believe that progress should be made on issues relating to Trade and the Environment. Underpinning our work across all areas we want to see a focus on issues of concern to developing country members and in particular least-developed countries.

The outcome of our negotiations must be gains for all. All of us need to compromise to make progress. For its part the EU has made substantial proposals in all key areas and has consistently demonstrated its willingness to engage in meaningful and effective dialogue. This positive approach will continue and has to be matched by others.

Agriculture is a key issue in this Round. The agriculture/food sector is very important for Ireland's economic prosperity and underpins the vitality of our rural communities. We are committed to developing the role of agriculture in our economy. We recognize that the negotiations will bring about greater liberalization of international trade in agricultural products and we see this as an important element in the successful conclusion of the Doha Development Agenda. In reaching its agreement on reform of the Common Agricultural Policy last June, the European Union showed its commitment to deliver on the promises of Doha. Hard decisions were taken at that time. The reforms have provided the flexibility necessary for the EU to move in the agriculture negotiations. We expect that others also will show flexibility and negotiate realistically.

The WTO is seen by an ever-increasing number of Governments as an Organization that can contribute to development. The Irish Government warmly welcomes the accession of Nepal and Cambodia to the WTO during this Ministerial Meeting. While the WTO has many LDC founder members, these are the first to join since 1995.

Increasing developing country membership of the WTO confirms the role which trade can play in development. In saying this I recognize that trade liberalization is not an end in itself, it is a means for achieving economic and social development. The WTO provides a level playing field where all participants contribute to making and upholding a rules-based system of economic governance.

Some Members may require assistance to build the capacity to exploit the potential which the Doha Development Agenda should deliver. Just as Ireland is contributing to technical assistance activities designed to facilitate developing country participation in this Round, we are committed to assisting developing countries, and especially least-developed countries to exploit its outcome.

What we have here in Cancún is more than a simple opportunity to strengthen the multilateral system. It is a unique opportunity to agree measures that will drive economic growth and deliver prosperity in every corner of the globe. It is an opportunity to embrace the liberalization of world markets for the betterment of all our peoples.

History will not judge us kindly if we spurn that opportunity.

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