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AUSTRIA

Statement by H.E. Dr. Martin Bartenstein
Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Labour

Let me begin by expressing the gratitude of the Government of Austria to the Government and people of Mexico for hosting the Fifth Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization. The preparation and organization of the Conference have been excellent. You have created the atmosphere needed for us to achieve our common objective - to give impetus to our negotiations for a new Round of multilateral trade liberalization which will meet the needs of all our countries, developing and developed, and by that to contribute effectively to strengthening the global economy.

I would also like to thank the Chairman of the General Council Ambassador Carlos Perez del Castillo, Director-General Supachai Panitchpakdi and all Members of the WTO Secretariat for their hard work in preparation for this Ministerial.

Austria fully endorses the objectives and goals of the EU as put forward by the EU Commission. And we strongly support the fundamental purpose of all our endeavors which is the development aspect of this Round.

The developing world and especially the least-developed countries need our particular support, in order to meet the challenges of globalization and to fully integrate them into the multilateral trading system. With this objective, Austria has again pledged to the Doha Development Agenda Global Trust Fund in the hope that this contribution will help the WTO Secretariat to meet the increasing demands for technical cooperation.

On TRIPS and Health, so long overdue, we are particularly pleased that an agreement has been finally achieved.

Austria welcomes the accession of new Members during the last two years. The growth of the WTO family is of great importance to the multilateral trading system. Therefore, Austria calls on all of us to spare no effort to achieve early accessions of the candidates to the World Trade Organization, especially LDCs.

Removing market access barriers for non-agricultural products will lead to significant economic benefits for all WTO partners. Our Doha mandate is ambitious: to reduce or eliminate tariff peaks, high tariffs and tariff escalation. We are on the point of agreeing on a framework for our negotiations. As we look forward, we should not lose sight of this ambition when we come to fill in the detailed modalities and final figures.

Agriculture is an important part of the economies and social structures of all WTO Members. Further liberalization, expansion and reform of trade in agricultural products will make an important contribution to sustained economic growth, in both developing and developed countries. In order to achieve these goals, it is essential to muster strong public support. Other concerns must also be met,

in particular the multifunctional role of agriculture, which includes the protection of the environment and the sustained vitality of rural communities, food safety and other consumer concerns. The Doha Development Agenda must therefore represent a balance between trade concerns - market access, export competition, domestic support - and non-trade concerns. It must also provide special and differential treatment to developing countries.

WTO Agreements on all four of the Singapore issues: Trade Facilitation, Government Procurement, Competition and Investment, will bring benefits to all WTO Members, developing and developed alike. We will fully take into account the concerns of developing countries, so to give the necessary comfort during the negotiations. Our task here is to launch these negotiations after Cancún as agreed in Doha.

Austria attaches the utmost importance to issues which are related to the environment. We have to accelerate and intensify our work in this area. Our objective is a sustainable trade policy. To achieve this, we need to balance competitiveness with social and environmental concerns at national and global level. Environmental protection does not present threats and limitations to trade, but offers additional business opportunities. Eco-labeling can promote sustainable production and consumption, and MEA observership at the WTO can promote coherence between international institutions.

If GATS negotiations are not at stake here in Cancún, the aim to achieve progressively higher levels of liberalization is in the interest of all, while maintaining the right of Members to regulate public services in accordance with national policy objectives.

At this half-way point in our negotiations, Austria would like to reiterate its commitment to an ambitious Doha Development Agenda in which we achieve a proper balance between our trade, environmental, social and development-oriented objectives. What is at stake is more than just taking stock of progress, giving guidance to the negotiations and taking necessary decisions. The world needs a firm commitment to global cooperation.
