

# WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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## ESTONIA

Statement by H.E. Mr Priit Kolbre  
Permanent Under-Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Let me begin by thanking the Mexican Government for the enormous amount of work done. It's not an easy task to put together a conference of one of the world's biggest organizations. But our hosts have done a magnificent job! Not to mention this gorgeous location.

We have gathered here to spend five days in heated discussions concerning trade issues. Why? Why is trade so important to so many countries in the world?

To find an answer, let's take a glance into the depths of history. Going back in time 3000 years, we find Phoenicians living on the shores of the Mediterranean. A nation that, although having come from the desert, and being great neither in might nor leadership, had the wisdom to achieve greatness through the only resource available to all - trade. Going out into the world to exchange goods and services with other nations enabled them to acquire and accumulate wealth. It was trade that opened up the world to them. It was trade that gave them access to the various resources of the world. It was trade that enabled them to realize their true inner strength.

Although we have reached the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we still face hurdles similar to the ones that the ancient Phoenicians had to confront. The world is a big place, resources are often scarce, and instability a far too often prevailing condition.

Today, Estonia is together with the American people in living through again the horrors of tragic events of September 11 and in commemorating the victims.

Yesterday we were shocked to learn of an attack against Mrs Anna Lindh, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden. Today we are in a deep grief. We have lost a great European and a dear friend of Estonia. Our condolences go to her loved ones, to the Swedish delegation and to the people of Sweden.

Mr Chairman,

Sharing and exchanging, through unrestricted trade, the benefits of our toils, with our partners, enables us to overcome our own shortcomings and the countless difficulties placed in our path by nature and fate. My own country is perhaps a good example of what trade liberalization can achieve. We chose a very liberal path, and as a result, trade has become one of the most powerful engines of growth for us.

Back in 1947, 23 states laid the foundations for the World Trade Organization. This was done at a time when a large part of our world was still devastated by the very recent horrors of the greatest war that mankind has had to endure. Cooperation through trade, and by constantly making it

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less restricted, has brought us to where we are today. The reality, which we are presently experiencing, is markedly different from the one that existed in the post-war period - during the past five decades, the total volume of world trade has increased 18 times.

This has been made possible by a concerted effort and by a lot of determination. Trade liberalization is not a rubber band that will break if stretched too far. Instead, it is more like a string that we continuously weave. Something which becomes a safety net for us during difficult times; and something, which helps us climb to new heights during more prosperous times.

It would be a contradiction in terms to talk of globalization, without having a truly global reach. And the World Trade Organization, which will soon have 148 Members, can claim to be global, in the true sense of the word. Furthermore, the large number of civil society representatives involved adds to this global dimension. But all of this is accompanied by the heavy burden of responsibility, which requires us to constantly carry out essential reforms, that really make a difference.

The last time we had the chance to make such a difference was two years ago in Doha. We managed to set aside our differing views on details, and were able to achieve DDA that has since then been the basis for our work. The decisions made at Doha have resulted in negotiations and endeavours, which are definitely not over yet. Nevertheless, I'm sure that you will agree with me, that we have come a long way.

In conclusion, I would like to refer to Estonia's speech in Doha, in which we compared trade negotiations with a bicycle ride - if you stop, you fall. Let's not learn this lesson the hard way!

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