

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/MIN(03)/ST/58
11 September 2003

(03-4803)

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
Fifth Session
Cancún, 10 - 14 September 2003

Original: Spanish

HONDURAS

Statement by H.E. Mr. Norman García
Secretary of State, Department of Industry and Commerce

On behalf of the Government of Honduras, which I have the honour to represent, I wish to express my deep gratitude to the people and Government of Mexico for hosting this Ministerial Conference and for the warm hospitality extended to us in this beautiful city of Cancún.

We also wish to associate ourselves with the expressions of appreciation and congratulations addressed to the Director-General and the WTO Secretariat for their services; their work deserves the recognition of each and every one of us.

In 1990, Honduras embarked upon a far-reaching economic and institutional reform. Part of this initiative involved the decision to accede to the GATT in 1994 and we hereby reaffirm our commitment to a rules-based multilateral trading system. We do, however, feel that imbalances and asymmetries are present in the system, although we trust that these negotiations, which form part of what is aptly known as the Development Round, will manage to establish rules designed to achieve fairer and more balanced trade for all countries.

Honduras is of the opinion that special and differential treatment provisions must be an integral part of the WTO Agreements so that the interests of developing countries are properly reflected in the commitments under this Round.

For my Government, the issue at the heart of these negotiations is agriculture. Our obligation must be to establish modalities for further commitments in the very near future, including special and differential treatment provisions pursuant to the Doha mandate.

On this occasion, as we are gathered together here to review the work conducted since the Doha Ministerial Conference, we would like to propel the negotiating process forward in this sector in order to achieve a balanced framework agreement which meets the needs of all Members of this Organization, in particular the more vulnerable among us. In this respect, special and differential treatment will have to be translated into concrete legally-binding measures. One way of putting special and differential treatment into effect and, at the same time, of rectifying to a certain extent the imbalances stemming from the Uruguay Round, is to exempt low-income and highly-indebted countries from tariff reductions on their most sensitive agricultural products. My country would find it difficult to accept reductions in domestic support and the elimination of export subsidies not provided for in the near future.

My Government considers the inclusion of strategic products without tariff reductions and the special safeguard mechanism to be key elements which will have to be taken into consideration in any agreement approved at this Ministerial Conference.

Honduras welcomes the substantive work which has been carried out in the negotiating group on market access for non-agricultural products. In this respect, and in order to keep up the positive work on establishing modalities in this sector, a framework agreement adopted at this Ministerial Conference will have to include concrete elements on special and differential treatment, as provided for in paragraph 16 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration, in particular with regard to paragraph 3(b) of Article XXVIII *bis* of the GATT 1994. To this end, we urge Members to give positive consideration to the initiative tabled by a number of developed countries so that IDA-only countries do not have to undertake any further tariff reduction commitments in this sector.

With regard to service sector negotiations, we reiterate the need for the sectors and modes of supply of interest to developing countries such as Honduras to be included in this new round of negotiations. Likewise, we exhort Members to rectify the existing imbalance between negotiations on market access and those on the regulation of the Agreement itself.

Turning now to the issue of TRIPS and Public Health, we welcome the decision on the implementation of paragraph 6 of the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which will ensure access to certain pharmaceutical products for countries facing specific health problems and the production capacity of which is insufficient or non-existent.

As far as negotiations on the Dispute Settlement Understanding are concerned, we welcome the fact that their deadline has been extended, thereby enabling us to discharge the mandate of clarifying and amending this Understanding.

Whilst we acknowledge the effort which has gone into the work on special and differential treatment, we feel that Members must show greater flexibility so that positive results can be achieved in this area. We endorse the idea of a framework agreement on special and differential treatment and encourage Members to pay full attention to this issue since it encompasses not only implementation-related concerns, but also development issues.

Honduras stands ready to work constructively on the Singapore Issues provided that our interests and needs, in particular in the agricultural sector, are taken into account in the overall outcome.

We believe that each individual issue should be analyzed separately and that modalities adopted by explicit consensus should pay particular attention to cooperation, technical assistance and capacity-building and be clear as regards the coverage, scope and structure of the negotiations.

To conclude, may I take this opportunity to convey the firm belief of the Government of Honduras that this Ministerial Conference affords a valuable opportunity for us to find collective solutions so that the needs and interests of developing countries, in particular the poorest among us, are taken into consideration in these negotiations and a fairer and more balanced multilateral trading system achieved.
