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PHILIPPINES

Statement by the Honourable Manuel Roxas Secretary of Trade and Industry

Let me begin by extending our greetings and felicitations to the people and government of Mexico for the warm hospitality and excellent arrangements.

Dear colleagues, the Philippines comes to this meeting full of hope and expectations. We want this meeting to succeed. Our people want us to succeed.

Two years ago in Doha, we began a momentous undertaking: we launched what is now known as the Doha Development Agenda (DDA). The Philippines is proud of and takes to heart the developmental dimension of the Doha Agenda.

We fought for this at Doha and we assiduously applied ourselves to the tasks set forth in the DDA; and much work has happened in Geneva since then. This is best exemplified by the successful Decision on TRIPS and Public Health. But let us not fool ourselves - much, much more work remains to be done in order to actualize the great potentials of the DDA.

The Philippines' ambition in Cancún is to ensure that the developmental elements we so bravely embarked on in Doha are carried through in our work here in Cancún; that the global trading system genuinely contributes to development; that trade and liberalization are not simply ends in themselves but are tools for development.

Agriculture is both the engine and the brake(s) to these negotiations. Agriculture, and what we do with it, determines whether we are successful here in Cancún. The Philippines shall work towards clear, substantial and irreversible reforms in Domestic Support and Export Subsidies; this is so that we can level the playing field for our farmers.

Moreover we believe it imperative that appropriate provisions allowing for special products and special safeguard measures be incorporated into the work programme for agriculture. The principle of special and differential treatment in favour of developing countries is manifested through these provisions.

Our negotiations on agriculture should consider what reasonably can be absorbed by the developing countries and should respect flexibilities that developing countries require in pursuing rural development and food security.

On non-agricultural market access, the Philippines' goal is to preserve the flexibilities we presently have with respect to managing our tariff structure.

Presently our average applied tariffs are about one fourth our bound rates. Thus, any formula we agree to must not contain elements that perpetuate the present disadvantages that we suffer under. Certainly, we want to preserve whatever headroom we have at present so we can continue to adjust our tariffs to suit our development imperatives.

Flexibility for developing countries in these NAMA negotiations cannot simply mean longer time-frames. Developing countries, reeling under the dislocations engendered by globalization, need different approaches towards tariff reduction as well as the ability to exclude an appropriate number of sensitive products.

On trade rules, the Philippines is in the initial stages of applying the appropriate use of trade remedies to assist our domestic industries from unfair and injurious import competition. Thus, we need to preserve the principles, objectives and effectiveness of present trade remedy rules.

On the new issues, the so-called "Singapore Issues", the Philippines is uncertain of their substantive implications for our interests and thus remains unconvinced of the need to begin negotiations.

Indeed while we recognize that a liberalized trading environment is a desirable end-state, we are even more concerned with the process of how we get there. We must properly manage the transformations and its accompanying dislocations.

Dear colleagues, our job in Cancún is to create and nurture the policy setting required in order to pursue our overall development. In the process we must make central the unique development, trade and financial needs of developing countries. Our obligation to our respective peoples is to put food on their table today and not merely promise a better life tomorrow.
