

# WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/MIN(99)/ST/104  
2 December 1999

(99-5319)

---

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE  
Third Session  
Seattle, 30 November - 3 December 1999

Original: English

## SWEDEN

### Statement by H.E. Mr. Leif Pagrotsky Minister for Trade

The WTO has one major goal: to promote prosperity and development.

I have yet to meet somebody who does not want prosperity and development.

Still, I read in the papers about people who are mobilizing against the WTO and a new trade round.

And still, we the representatives of responsible governments here in Seattle have great difficulties when trying to agree on an agenda for a new round of trade negotiations.

Why is this?

I think much of our troubles arise because we have a credibility problem. We seem to lack the confidence of the general public. But just as important is the seeming lack of mutual confidence among ourselves.

The demonstrators believe that free trade is not fair. And we have so far not been able to convince them otherwise. Could that be because most of us behave inconsistently in relation to free trade? I think so. We pay lip service to the expression, but at the same time we negotiate as if imports were a bad thing for a country. As long as we do that, we cannot blame people for not following. And as long as we do that, we will have problems agreeing on an agenda. We become defensive as negotiators, at a time when the world needs us to look forward, to show vision and leadership.

Because only with a vision, with faith in each others' good intentions, can we achieve our goals. We do not create prosperity and development by concentrating on minimizing our so called losses. If we want progress, we must dare behave as believers in free trade, not just talk about its virtues.

So what then should we do here in Seattle?

I think we should focus on two basic things: Prosperity and partnership.

We must bear in mind that market access is the key to creating prosperity and development. This holds true in both developed and developing countries. Remaining industrial tariffs are a source of inefficiency. Remaining obstacles to freer trade in agriculture and textiles prevent development. And restrictions on trade in services are bad for the consumer. Hence, increased market access is our most important tool in pursuit of prosperity. Benefits will come from exports and imports alike.

In order to succeed in promoting prosperity, we must create a sense of partnership among ourselves, among WTO Members. Distrust is a major obstacle to progress today. We in the developed countries need to prove ourselves serious partners, if we are to count on the help of less developed countries in tackling the new trade issues of great concern to our citizens. Therefore, we need to concern ourselves with being consistent free traders, deserving the trust of others. We must behave so that our motives, also when raising environmental issues and core labour standards, cannot be put in question. It must be absolutely clear, that when we raise the issue of human rights in the workplace; we are not talking about the fundamental rights already established by the ILO. We should leave no room for individual fantasies about for example wage levels. As a credibility raising measure, I call on all WTO Members to ratify the relevant ILO conventions.

But again, the most powerful means that we have at our disposal, for creating prosperity and increased well-being – but also for enhancing workers rights and environmental standards all over the globe – is freer trade. We must put an end to the marginalization of some countries in the world economy. To start with, we should decide here in Seattle to increase the regular budget of the WTO for technical assistance. It is crucial that all developing countries gain the ability to implement WTO agreements.

We must build a strong case for the view that when it comes to trade, it is free that means fair.

---