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KAZAKSTAN

Statement by H.E. Mr. Zhaksybek A. Kulekeyev
Minister of Economy

(Speaking as an Observer)

I would like to thank the Government and the people of the United States, Seattle City and the organizers of this WTO Ministerial Conference for the warm hospitality extended to us.

Kazakhstan, as a young country with only eight-year old experience of integration into the broad world economic community, welcomes the objectives of creating the WTO as stated in the Marrakesh Agreement, which became a driving force for the development and stability not only of the WTO Member countries, but those of many other countries seeking accession to the WTO. Kazakhstan is supportive of the idea of granting special and differential treatment to developing, least-developed and transition countries, which provide these countries with a better access to markets, leading to improvement of living standards and maximum employment.

This is of paramount importance for transition countries, which in a short period of time, undertake fundamental reforms in order to transform their societies and economies into States with market systems. By doing this, they have to overcome great economic difficulties related to both internal and external realities, and this factor complicates their accession to the WTO. These countries, including Kazakhstan, need flexibility in the accession process, which would enable them to form a trade regime as a result of implementation of economic reforms and liberalization of the trade policy by benefiting from membership to the WTO. We hope that this conference and the upcoming Round will develop positive measures that will enable transition, developing and least-developed countries to take a worthy place in world trade in accordance with their needs and economic development.

The Republic of Kazakhstan has been pursuing its efforts to accede to the World Trade Organization since early 1996 by vigorously adapting its trade-related legislation and trade policy to the WTO rules and disciplines. During this period of time, we have been accomplishing a big work by liberalizing our foreign trade regime, reducing our maximum tariffs, cancelling export tariffs, significantly curtailing the list of goods subject to export-import licensing.

Since the last Working Party meeting in October 1998, Kazakhstan has undertaken a huge effort to bring its legal and regulatory regime in compliance with the WTO rules and principles. During this period, Kazakhstan adopted nine new laws and amendments to five existing laws. These laws cover such spheres as customs, intellectual property, trade laws, standards and sanitary. The Texts of all these laws have been submitted to the WTO Secretariat. In the course of preparations made for the next Working Party Meeting and bilateral negotiations, Kazakhstan has submitted the improved offer on services.

The Government of Kazakhstan, by acceding to the WTO, hopes for understanding and support by the WTO Member countries and hopes that trading partners duly take into account the difficult economic situation in Kazakhstan, associated with comprehensive reforms and structural adjustment when negotiating import tariff concessions in agriculture and industry, domestic support and export subsidies in agriculture as well as market access in services.

In view of the new Round of multilateral trade negotiations, Kazakhstan would like to thank WTO Members for opening the Round for acceding countries. The Government of the Republic will make every effort to participate in these negotiations. We are of the view that Kazakhstan should be able to become a WTO Member during the new Round, while its terms of accession, including commitments and obligations on market access in goods and services, should be an integral part of the Round's results.

Kazakhstan is now ready to be engaged in intensive bilateral and multilateral negotiations. We look forward for accession terms that will be mutually beneficial to our country and trading partners.
