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ROMANIA

Statement by H.E. Mr Eugen Dijmarescu,
Minister of Commerce

First of all, I wish to convey to the Government and the people of United States of Mexico, on behalf of the Romanian delegation, the gratitude for their hospitality and the excellent arrangements for holding this important Ministerial Conference.

I would, also, like to welcome the tremendous efforts and excellent work of the Chairman of the General Council, the Director-General and the Members of the WTO in striving to prepare the draft of the Ministerial Declaration as a middle ground between the various positions expressed by the Members.

The draft presented to us is even more valuable as the results of the negotiations are not the best: with few exceptions, we haven't succeeded in observing the deadlines established at Doha.

Likewise, we should permanently bear in mind that the present situation of the world economy is becoming a serious concern to all of us. Thus, the WTO takes up a huge responsibility, as a global organization aimed to restore confidence in the future of the world economy.

We are all aware that the world is watching us closely. What is at stake now is the credibility of the WTO as an institution aimed to promote global liberalization and non-discrimination. And this can be achieved only through collective responsibility and enough flexibility during ongoing negotiations, on behalf of all participants.

The growing relevance of the multilateral trading system is being enhanced by the accession of two new Members, i.e. Cambodia and Nepal. Romania would like to take this opportunity to welcome these two partners into the WTO family.

I would like to stress that Romania supports the continuous multilateral trade liberalization within the WTO, based on the overall balance of rights, interests and obligations of all Members. We have the firm conviction that the country's active participation in the multilateral trading system is contributing to its economic growth.

In this regard, allow me to draw your attention to the fact that Romania witnesses its third year of sustained economic growth mainly due to its promising exports dynamics. It became obvious to all of us that foreign trade represents the main engine of development and economic restructuring. That's why it is important, even vital, to look not just for a freer trade, but also for rules and terms of trade designed to ensure stability, predictability and fair trade.

I take this opportunity to reiterate that Romania, as a candidate country negotiating its accession to the EU, pays special attention to the process of harmonization of its trade policies with those of the EU.

Nevertheless, we have to consider the economic development gaps that still exist between us. Therefore, Romania attaches particular importance to the role of developing countries in the trading system and encourages the adoption of special and differential provisions.

The agricultural sector is for Romania, as well as for other countries, the most sensitive sector in terms of economics, politics and social security. Agriculture is the foundation of society in every country. We have, also, to admit that there are differences in the natural conditions and the historical background from one country to another.

Therefore, we think that the diversity and coexistence of agricultural features among various countries need to be preserved. This can be achieved by supporting those modalities which allow the continuation of the reform process initiated in this sector. At the same time, Romania is one of the supporters of the non-trade concerns approach and we consider that it is worth to analyse agriculture in its entire environment: food security, tradition, culture, population settlements, protection and development of tourism and environment.

Given all of the above, we strongly hope, and indeed believe, that there are still ways to successfully bridge the remaining differences between the positions of the Members regarding the negotiations on trade in agriculture.

In relation to the market access, we strongly support the proposal comprised in the Draft Ministerial Text, i.e. that negotiations shall aim to reduce or as appropriate eliminate tariffs, as the proper way to do this is by a formula approach. Tariff reduction shall commence from the bound rates, where applicable, and we expect the other Members to bind 100% as a result of the rates for non-agricultural products.

At the same time, we would like to emphasize the importance of the non-tariff barriers as part of these negotiations and we hope Members are aware of the need to continue the work on identifying and addressing them adequately.

We are sure that Ministers will give instructions to the Negotiating Group in order to push for finalizing the modalities, with a view to conclude the negotiations by the beginning of 2005.

Romania supports further liberalization of trade in services, the most dynamic part of the world economy. It is important to mobilize ourselves in order to finalize the negotiations in this area.

We welcome the adoption of the Decision on TRIPS and public health. This was an important step towards sending the world a message about our commitment to the tremendously serious problems faced by certain developing and least-developed countries. Availability and affordability of essential medicines is a universal human right.

We must emphasize the importance of the Singapore Issues. Though they were born at the Singapore Ministerial, they add a new development dimension to the Doha Round. There is still a lot of work to do on these matters here in Cancún, to persuade Members to come to a common point, but we maintain our confidence in reaching an acceptable compromise.

In conclusion, I'm sure that your experience and wisdom will enable us to find collective solutions to all the difficult issues within the ongoing negotiations and that the final Declaration is going to take into consideration also the needs and interests of the developing countries.

Thank you for your kind attention and I wish all of you full success and a constructive output to the works of this Conference.
