

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

WT/MIN(01)/ST/37
10 November 2001

(01-5620)

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE
Fourth Session
Doha, 9 - 13 November 2001

Original: English

THAILAND

Statement by H.E. Dr. Adisai Bodharamik
Minister of Commerce

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to His Highness Emir (Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani) and the Government of Qatar for the excellent arrangements made for the Fourth Ministerial Conference. I also wish to thank the Chairman of the General Council, Stuart Harbinson, and the Director-General, Mike Moore, for their extensive efforts to come up with the Draft Declaration, which provides us with a good basis for negotiations.

We are gathering here in Doha amidst global economic uncertainties to discuss a number of important issues, the results of which will have a profound impact on the global economy as well as the future of the World Trade Organization. To reverse the trend of the world economic downturn, we must regain confidence in the multilateral trading system by finding a way to collectively push the global trade talks forward.

On the part of Thailand, we attach utmost importance to the negotiations on agriculture, as it is still the sector that is discriminated against in the WTO framework. Trade-distorting export subsidies and domestic support resorted to by some major trading partners are unjustly tolerated at the expense of the developing countries that have comparative advantages in this sector. The only reason Thailand enters into a new round of trade negotiations is to seek commitments from Members to end the discrimination against agriculture and have it fully integrated into the WTO rules and disciplines. We would be willing to work out with our trading partners on the timeframe to achieve such goals.

Without the commitments to end trade distorting export subsidies and domestic support in agriculture, a new round of trade negotiations will not be relevant to Thailand.

Thailand has joined with other Members to push for a WTO Ministerial Declaration for **TRIPS and Public Health**. Without such Declaration, the public perception of the WTO as an institution that does not respond to the needs of the poor in the developing countries will be more difficult to prevent and a failure on this issue will have serious repercussions in a wider context. Indeed, our goal is not to weaken the TRIPS Agreement but to seek clarification and to assure the public that the TRIPS Agreement will not be an obstacle to the public health policies of Member countries. Another issue of importance is the possible extension of the protection of geographical indications under TRIPS Article 23 to products other than wines and spirits. [WTO work in this regard should include as a matter of principle the issues of effective means of remedy and prevention of abuses.]

With regard to investment and competition policy, we recognize that most Members, particularly the developing countries, are not ready to participate in full-fledged negotiations on multilateral agreement on these two issues at the moment. They need to be convinced of the benefits to be derived from having such multilateral agreements as well as the implications on their industrial

and developmental policies. We therefore suggest further analytical work by the Working Group and to have its recommendation for decision whether to embark on these negotiations at the Fifth Ministerial Conference.

Not only the Government but also civil society in Thailand is very conscious of environment protection as well as sustainable development. We however believe that existing WTO provisions are adequately addressing environmental concerns in relation to trade. The commitment on Trade and Environment should continue with its existing work programme that is of value to Members especially the developing countries to have better understanding on this complicated issue. In this respect, we have to express our strong objection to turn the Committee into a negotiating forum on environment. We cannot accept any proposal to weaken relevant WTO provisions using environmental protection as a pretext to create new trade barrier measures. To make it clear, we are against the introduction of a precautionary principle that is not science based and goes beyond the scope of existing WTO provisions.

Last but not least, we would like to extend a warm welcome to China and Chinese Taipei as new members of this Organization and look forward to working constructively with them.

In conclusion, a successful outcome at Doha can. be achieved only if Members demonstrate political will to compromise and narrow their differences. Thailand is ready to do its part in supporting the launch of a new round since we believe that it can help keep the world economy on track. At the current possible onset of a global session, we need the WTO more than ever and a successful launch in Doha will certainly strengthen confidence in the rules-based trading system and that will be in the interest of all.
