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CANADA

Statement by the Honourable Pierre S. Pettigrew Minister for International Trade

I am honoured to be here in Doha to represent Canada as we strive to launch a new round of global trade negotiations.

It is my pleasure to extend Canada's congratulations to Qatar as host of this Ministerial. Your efforts in meeting the challenges posed under the circumstances have been exceptional. On behalf of the Canadian delegation, thank you.

The World Trade Organization is at an important juncture. While we have witnessed extraordinary economic growth since Marrakesh, the current slowdown has demonstrated we cannot stand idle. Today's environment underscores the importance of liberalized trade to economic growth. It is clear the WTO plays a lead role in maintaining confidence in our global economic institutions.

LAUNCH NEW ROUND TO PROMOTE GROWTH

In Canada's view, this role requires us to strengthen our rules and further liberalize to provide a solid foundation for future growth.

Now some of you – both within these corridors and outside in our respective communities – may be asking themselves why we are trying to launch. Indeed, I have heard some of you question whether further liberalization is the best approach for improving your economies and the lives of your citizens.

I think the answer is clear. It is found in the growing body of evidence which demonstrates that economic growth and prosperity are clearly connected to a strong trading system. Trade is a core plank on which to build economic development – the linkages are unmistakable.

But trade is not just about economies. It underpins much of the progress toward the world's political and social goals. All WTO Members want stability and prosperity for their people. A successful launch will help us achieve these objectives by providing benefits and opportunities for all Member countries.

COHERENCE

At the same time, we must be realistic about our expectations. A decision to launch broad-based negotiations is only part of the answer to improving peoples' quality of life. An increase to our collective prosperity is a reasonable objective, but the WTO – by itself – cannot resolve all of the world's problems.

The work we undertake in this Organization must remain relevant to our broader concerns. Relevance means meeting the challenges of globalization. Relevance means ensuring that international policies and practices are not only consistent but also complementary. Relevance means discussing the dynamics between trade and other aspects of our lives.

To this end, Canada believes coherence and coordination among our many international organizations is vital. The WTO should continue to strengthen its ties with such organizations to ensure its work is relevant within our overall priorities. In this regard, I think it is particularly unfortunate that Members have not been able to agree on the need to ensure the WTO works with the International Labour Organization to advance core labour standards.

CANADA'S INTERESTS

I would now like to turn to some of the issues that we will be discussing over the course of this Conference. Canada's objectives at the WTO reflect the interests of our citizens and have been arrived at following extensive consultations with individuals and representatives from all segments of our society.

For Canada, a positive outcome on agriculture is key. A broader negotiating agenda holds the promise of gaining more meaningful reform in agriculture that will benefit our farmers, exporters and consumers.

I share the concerns of some of my colleagues from developing countries about the fairness of the agricultural trading system. Canada is seeking real progress in levelling the international playing field by further strengthening the multilateral rules governing agricultural trade, addressing trade-distorting subsidies, and significantly improving market access opportunities.

A new round would provide significant gains in other important areas such as services and non-agricultural market access, and would thus help to ensure we can all extract the greatest benefit from the modern global economy.

We believe that, with a broad-based agenda, we will succeed in creating an environment conducive to reciprocity, and allow Members to pursue their respective interests to the fullest.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT ROUND

As a leading trading nation, Canada understands the advantages of international trade. A strong, open multilateral trading system can energize economies, spur innovation, reduce costs to consumers and business, and create employment opportunities.

I firmly believe we must ensure that any further trade liberalization maximizes the benefits to developing and least-developed Members. Canada strongly supports a "growth and development" theme for these negotiations. There are still some countries – and some people – who feel excluded, who feel they have not experienced the benefits. And, while gains have been made, the level of poverty is still alarmingly high.

In the face of this, complacency is not an option. All WTO Members must do their part. Better access to markets and technical assistance for least-developed countries must be a priority for a new round.

There are many lessons to be learned from the task of implementing the Uruguay Round Agreements and I have heard developing Members' concerns. We have come a long way on issues such as implementation and market access for developing Members.

However, it is only through broad negotiations that we will resolve the outstanding concerns and that developing Members will achieve the objectives that are of interest to them.

TRANSPARENCY

I have spoken about some of the elements that I believe should be addressed at this Conference, let me now conclude with a few words on how we are doing our work.

Since Seattle, we have made progress in making the WTO a more open and inclusive organization. However, there are further hurdles that have to be surmounted.

Our efforts on internal transparency have resulted in a decision-making process that is very inclusive. I believe the structure of this Ministerial Conference demonstrates this achievement.

But, we can do even more to demystify our processes and our objectives. I believe that a greater window onto the WTO – through such steps as an agreement to release our draft negotiating texts – will help promote public understanding of the WTO, of the benefits of trade, and of the importance of clear and equitable rules governing how countries trade with each other.

I also believe that WTO members and the WTO system of Agreements will benefit from the views of an informed global public. We must continue to listen to their ideas and invite their comments in order to make this Organization even more representative.
