

WTO 7th Ministerial Conference

Plenary Session, "Overview of WTO activities"

Statement by Mr. Jonas Gahr STØRE, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway

Madam Chair, Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Norway - my country - is a living example of how GATT and the WTO have been key guarantors of economic growth, development and prosperity.

Our challenge today is to make that opportunity and those benefits of trade available to all.

Our task as Governments is to seize the agenda and make the multilateral trading system contribute to decent work, welfare, sustainable development and human progress. Not for the few but for all.

Four years after the near success of Hong Kong, let us remind ourselves: Our first priority remains to conclude the Doha Development Agenda. We are on overtime. We have to succeed in 2010.

We know what it will take: Political leadership and commitment, willingness to

compromise and seek a greater good, combining ambition with realism. Norway stands ready to do its part.

The backdrop of this ministerial meeting is challenging: As always, as the world recovers from the financial crisis the poor in developing countries are the most severely affected. They do not have at their disposal the safety nets or economic stimulus packages that countries such as mine can afford.

As a few of us were reminded of at the Aid for Trade session this morning, developing countries will rely on trade to pull themselves out of the crises. We, the richer countries, must help them succeed, by enhancing the Aid for Trade regime but not least; to conclude the DDA swiftly.

An ambitious and balanced conclusion can only be reached if we respect the original Doha mandate. That means a clear focus on the interests of developing and in particular the least developed members across the board.

In addition to concluding the key chapters, we also need to focus on issues of particular interest to developing countries such as the

implementation of duty and quota-free market access for LDCs, preference erosion, cotton, TRIPS CBD, transfer of technology, technical assistance and capacity building.

Considerable progress has been achieved. We must avoid selective reopening of stabilised areas which would lead to an unravelling of the total package.

But as we all know, a number of important issues must be solved before we can claim victory.

For Norway's part the most essential outstanding issues are related to Sensitive Products in agriculture. We are prepared to go the last mile on the basis of the progress made to date.

Let me conclude by expressing support for the idea to arrange a stocktaking early next year - and then ministers should stand ready to do their part.

Madam Chair,

Looking beyond the conclusion of the Doha round, we see on the horizon a number of key

issues that should be dealt with in succeeding rounds:

One is the combined effects of climate change and the food crisis, underlining the importance of food security.

We now prepare for Copenhagen. We must see to it that the multilateral trading system and agreements on climate change remain mutually supportive. Only then will international trade policy and liberalisation of trade in climate-related goods and services be part of the solution to this global challenge.

Also looking ahead, we need to address the social dimension and put decent work on our agenda. Norway supports the ideas, backed by labour unions, to promote coherence between what is done in the WTO and what is done at the ILO. Norway is prepared to approach these issues in the transparent, patient and open-minded way that characterises the work of the WTO.

But first - and as our priority, we need to urgently conclude the DDA.

Thank you, Madam Chair.