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## TURKEY

Statement Circulated by Dr. İbýn Çelebi,  
Minister of State

I would like to thank the Swiss authorities, the representatives of the missions in Geneva and the WTO Secretariat for this excellent organization.

The second Ministerial Conference of the WTO, coinciding with the 50th Anniversary of the multilateral trading system, carries additional importance beyond its agenda.

For the last 50 years, the global community has witnessed valuable efforts to liberalize world trade under the auspices of the GATT and the WTO.

Turkey is a committed supporter of the WTO and what it represents. We are convinced that a liberal international trading system based on the principles of free competition, non-discrimination and elimination of barriers to trade are in the interest of the global community. Trade policies pursued by Turkey since the 1980s have vindicated this approach.

Since the unity of the developed, developing, least-developed and transition economies is the most valuable asset of the WTO, a balanced approach observing the interest of all WTO Members should be ensured.

Furthermore, due consideration should be given to the special needs and development requirements of the developing and the least-developed economies, including the difficulties encountered in implementing the outcomes of the Uruguay Round Agreements.

At this point, we recall the main goal of the Uruguay Round Agreements that the integration of the less-developed economies in international trade is important not only for their economic development but also for global trade expansion.

Within this context, I would like to express my satisfaction over the results of the initiatives taken since the first Ministerial Conference. We, the Ministers, had accepted a Plan of Action aiming at achieving better market access conditions for the least-developed countries and enhancing their trading opportunities. In accordance with this decision, Turkey, on an autonomous basis, has put into effect a comprehensive preferential tariff regime for the products originating from the least-developed countries as of 1 January 1998.

I hope these efforts will continue in the light of our common belief that the success of the multilateral trading system can only be attained by ensuring all countries' participation. At this point, I would like to point out the importance of providing technical assistance and capacity building programmes for developing and the least-developed countries. I believe that these activities should

also offer technical information regarding the WTO notification requirement which is directly related to the proper functioning of the Organization.

Since its establishment, the WTO has proved its indispensability with its 132 Member countries and with many others waiting to join. In this context, Turkey has always supported the applicant countries on their way to becoming WTO Members. We are confident that their accession will greatly contribute to the global welfare.

With this in mind, we sincerely hope to see that the ongoing negotiations for accession of applicant countries are concluded by the next Ministerial Meeting in 1999.

On the other hand, as the Turkish Government attaches value to the trade-creating effects and the complementary dimension of the Regional Trade Agreements in the world trading system, we take pleasure to see that the number of such agreements increased considerably after the 1990s. In fact, 69 regional agreements were notified to the GATT/WTO out of which 50 agreements have been notified during the post-1990 period.

In this specific context, I wish to make reference to Turkey's customs union experience with the European Union which resulted in much lowered customs duties and in turn better market access for third countries in industrial products.

I would also like to express my satisfaction regarding attainments reached within the framework of the Information Technology Agreement (ITA). As an original party to the Agreement, Turkey considers that this sectoral initiative is another positive step taken to reach freer trade.

The decision taken for the elimination of tariffs in the area of information technology was perhaps one of the most significant outcomes of the Singapore Ministerial Conference. I hope it will bring out its positive repercussions in the very short-term not only in information technology sector but generally in overall prosperity. In this context, I would like to express my belief that this kind of sectoral initiatives are complementary tools for global tariff liberalization.

Attaching great importance to the efforts to enlarge the scope of the information technology products, we, as the Turkish Government, closely observe and actively participate in the work of the ITA Committee.

Likewise, we consider the successful conclusion of negotiations on financial services as another important achievement in the liberalization of trade. I am certain that the determination displayed by the negotiating countries is real evidence of devotion to free trade, economic stability, growth and development. As a consequence of these negotiations, over 95 per cent of the global trade in the financial sector is going to be covered by the disciplines and rules of the WTO.

The conclusion of the negotiations has also coincided with a financial turmoil that some of the ASEAN countries experienced recently.

We believe the Agreement on Financial Services should also be evaluated from this point of view.

Furthermore, we welcome the successful and timely conclusion of the negotiations on basic telecommunications on 15 February 1997.

It is our expectation that the time-frames for negotiations and reviews indicated in the other WTO Agreements will be similarly respected in each case.

The WTO also provides us a forum to negotiate trade and trade related issues, in the fields that have not been covered by the WTO Agreements. Within this context, I would like to note with satisfaction the efforts proceeding in the Working Groups on Trade and Competition as well as on Trade and Investment.

As the task carried out by these two groups will be informative in nature, they may still need time to finalize their work. Nevertheless we believe that future negotiations on such "new issues" should only take place after reaching a consensus among WTO Members on the basis of a comprehensive and careful analysis.

In the field of competition, the examination conducted by the Working Group will surely provide benefits especially to the countries not having national competition policies. Bearing in mind the importance of competition policies in the globalization attempts, as they facilitate trade, we welcome the work undertaken by the Working Group on Interaction between Trade and Competition Policy. We consider that sound and multilaterally accepted competition policies will further serve to liberalize world trade by opening markets on the basis of the same criteria.

Electronic commerce is another area gaining weight recently. This topic may be one of the vital issues on the agenda of forthcoming multilateral trade negotiations.

Accordingly, Turkey attaches particular importance and priority to this matter and exerts considerable efforts to be prepared for the regulatory framework.

However, we should also keep in mind the rapidly growing need for establishing appropriate infrastructure particularly for the developing countries in this field.

Allow me to highlight some arrangements the Turkish Government has made with regard to WTO Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). Through structural changes introduced to intellectual property regime we have reached a comprehensive legal framework. The new laws on patents, trademarks, industrial designs, geographical indications and copyrights will further enhance this legal structure.

I would like to emphasize the importance we attach to the full implementation of the TRIPS Agreement. In this connection I would like to underline the need to extend the scope of geographical indications beyond wines and spirits to foodstuffs, agricultural and industrial products, and handicrafts including carpets.

I would like to conclude my words by reiterating my conviction that this Ministerial Conference will mark an important step in strengthening our pledges towards the establishment of cohesion and prosperity in the world.

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