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REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Statement by H.E. Mr Hwang Doo-yun
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On behalf of the Korean Government and delegation, I wish to express our deep gratitude to the people and the Government of Qatar for hosting this Ministerial Conference. I would also like to thank Chairman of the General Council Ambassador Stuart Harbinson, Director-General Mr Mike Moore and members of the WTO Secretariat for their hard work in preparation for this Ministerial.

For many reasons, I believe that this Ministerial will become an important milestone in the history of the world economy. The new membership of the People's Republic of China and Chinese Taipei is a historical achievement in itself. With their membership, the WTO takes an important step towards becoming a truly global organization. Korea wholeheartedly welcomes these two new Members and hopes for their active participation and contribution.

The work programme that we are going to adopt here at Doha is also bound to have significant implications for the future of the multilateral trading system. Indeed, the efforts put into the preparation of the work programme have been tremendous and the progress so far truly stands out. More than anything, the draft Declaration reflects sincere efforts to incorporate divergent views and differing interests of the Members. Particularly, the draft Declaration sets out a broad and balanced work programme aimed at not only expanding market access but also further developing the WTO rules. This is what Korea has hoped for all along.

Korea welcomes the fact that addressing the concerns of developing countries, including those related to implementation issues, is one of the key elements of the proposed work programme. Korea believes that developing economies are essential partners for the WTO process and their concerns and interests should be taken fully into account in all areas of the new negotiations. One of the most important lessons we learned from the Seattle experience was that we cannot go forward unless we go forward together.

Korea is also encouraged that the draft Declaration proposes negotiations on the Singapore issues, namely investment, competition, trade facilitation and transparency in government procurement. In such a rapidly changing world, the WTO cannot remain relevant without addressing these types of issues. Although they may be "new" to the WTO, they are important "contemporary" issues to the world and already have considerable influence over trade flows.

Yet in the language of the draft Declaration on the Singapore issues as well as other important areas, we see traces of strategic ambiguity. In seeking that the new negotiations be launched first, it may be necessary to leave some of them the way they are for now. However, at this Ministerial, we have to try to eliminate as many ambiguities as possible, so that we can generate a common understanding that is shared as tightly as possible for future negotiations.

On agriculture, Korea has serious concerns about the draft as it stands now. Korea has been faithfully implementing the Uruguay Agreement and is committed to worldwide efforts for agricultural reform. However, I want to highlight the fact that in many countries, agricultural liberalization sits on serious political sensitivities and important non-trade concerns. This reality has to be fully accounted for, here and in the future. We must not set out with a predetermined outcome for negotiations on this issue. Also, agricultural liberalization and reform require adjustment and need to take place over a period of time and at a sustained pace.

Next, we need to recognize that some of the WTO rules call for careful consideration of the experience for the past few years since the launch of the WTO. Of particular importance are ambiguous rules that have allowed erosion of market access commitments. Anti-dumping rules are examples of this. Today we are witnessing an increasing number of anti-dumping actions all around the world. Anti-dumping action is a necessary and legitimate tool for ensuring fair competition. But, its proliferation demonstrates that it can also become a convenient tool for protectionist purposes. At the new negotiations, we must clarify and improve the WTO anti-dumping rules, so that participants in world trade can avoid unnecessary obstacles.

In addressing the WTO rules, however, we must not undermine the integrity of the rules or the balance of rights and obligations embodied therein. In this respect, we are seriously concerned about the proposed negotiations on fisheries subsidies. Korea wants to emphasize that singling out a specific sector, such as the case in fisheries subsidies, is not an approach that is appropriate for the WTO.

In closing, the importance of this Ministerial is obvious: we cannot afford to repeat the Seattle experience here. We need to offer the world a boost of confidence in preserving and strengthening multilateral openness in trade. Furthermore, we need to offer reassurance and momentum for global economic rebound, particularly at this point when the world is concerned about world-wide slowdown. And, the world awaits demonstration of our commitments to addressing doubts, criticism, and pessimism related to globalization. Our success here will send the message to the world that the international community can and does continue to work together to achieve shared global prosperity.

Again, Korea is confident that the launch of new negotiations, together with the two important new memberships, will make this Doha Ministerial an important milestone in the history of the world economy. Korea has been an active participant in global trade for the past four decades. Koreans are keenly aware that our economic growth owes very much to multilateral openness. Korea is determined to do everything it can to make this Ministerial a success and hopes for the strong contribution of other Members as well.
