

3/12/99 – 7h15

MINISTERIAL DECISION ON TRADE, GLOBALISATION, DEVELOPMENT AND LABOUR ISSUES

Ministers

Recalling that the Members of the WTO have agreed that their relations in the field of trade and economic endeavour should be conducted with a view to raising standards of living, ensuring full employment and a large and steadily growing volume of real income and effective demand;

Reaffirming our pledge to implement the commitments assumed in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, including with respect to the goals of poverty eradication, the promotion of full employment and the promotion of social integration:

Reaffirming our pledge in the Rio Declaration that all states and all people shall cooperate in the essential task of eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in order to decrease the disparities in standards of living and better meet the needs of the majority of the people of the world;

Recalling paragraph 4 of the Singapore Ministerial Declaration and welcoming the work being undertaken within the United Nations system, including in the ILO's Working Party on the Social Dimensions of Liberalization of International Trade and, in particular, the adoption of the ILO's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and the follow-up envisaged to promote the Declaration;

Affirming that a conscious endeavour is required to promote greater equity in the globalized world economy through measures for poverty eradication, employment generation, universal literacy, basic health care and improved working conditions and that these objectives need to be addressed without recourse to protectionism;

Reaffirming that economic growth and development fostered by increased trade and further trade liberalisation contribute to the promotion of internationally recognized core labour standards;

Reaffirming our firm rejection of the use of labour standards for protectionist purposes and our agreement that the comparative advantage of countries, particularly low-wage developing countries, must in no way be put into question;

Decide

1. To recommend to our governments to establish a working forum on trade, globalisation, development and labour issues, with a view to promoting a better understanding of the issues involved through a substantive dialogue among governments. Participation should be open to relevant international organizations, such as the WTO, ILO, the World Bank and the UNCTAD. Such dialogue should include an examination of the relationship between trade policy, trade liberalisation, development, including the fight against poverty, and labour issues. To support substantive dialogue within the forum, the WTO Secretariat, in consultation with Members and other participating organizations, should sponsor the preparation of appropriate analytical work. Summaries of the forum's activities and recommendations should be reported to the WTO and to other participating organizations.

2. To request the Director-General of the WTO to contact the heads of international organizations to convey this decision and discuss with them practical modalities for the organization of the forum, and to report hereon to the General Council no later than [].