

(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)

**Statement by Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi  
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Commerce of Thailand  
At the Third WTO Ministerial Conference  
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Seattle, Washington**

Madam Chair, Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentleman

We are making history here in Seattle, for the right or wrong reasons the World Trade Organization has been making headlines after headlines. We have been successful in arousing keen interest from every corner of the globe. We have countless times sung the merits and praise of the rule-based multilateral trading system, so dearly guarded by the WTO. We have held out the hope for the millions of world citizens that expanding trade volume could be their salvation. It is therefore unacceptable that we disappoint them. We need to succeed, and succeed together at this most defining moment of our organization.

But by the look of the present confusing state of affairs, we may be running a great risk of failure, in spite of the heroic effort by our host and the Director General. Failure will doom us to the vicious cycle of protectionist and counter-protectionist measures. All will lose as unemployment will rise and consumers will have to put up with limited choices and higher expenses. Fervent protection of self interest may be deemed a laudable political move for an individual country. But surely this is not a guarantee for the successful enhancement of collective interests. We must strive to fuse our self interests with our trading partners' to achieve greater collective gains that will generate even larger returns to individual countries.

For a start, I view this Ministerial Meeting already as a success as it has induced widest participation from members of all background.

For the first time, developing countries have made adequate preparation which will enable them to be active participating in the forthcoming deliberations. Least-developed countries have made their voices heard and accommodating responses have already been offered by more advanced countries. This is indeed an auspicious beginning.

Trade and development **should** and must go hand in hand. This might sound a nice principle in theory but we must be able to prove in practice that this is really achievable. Everyone agrees that for our multilateral system to be really successful we must be able to fully integrate developing countries into the world economy. I hope that we can make this effort a permanent feature of our organization by paying consistent attention to their special plights and needs. For example, the High Level Meeting on Least-developed countries as proposed way back at the Singapore Ministerial Meeting should be made more regular and its secretarial requirements should be additionally funded over the regular budgets of the organization.

To be able to launch a new round which I personally would prefer to call a "Development Round" rather than a "Millenium Round", early concrete results should be weighed more in favor of the developing countries. Not only do they comprise the majority of the membership of the WTO, the majority of world population, but also their development needs are arguably of a more pressing nature.

Let us therefore be realistic on the issue of implementation. Advanced countries are simply much more capable than the less advanced in implementing existing agreements and decisions. Some countries have additionally been bogged down in their effort by the recent financial crisis. I agree that some concerns over implementation should be addressed at once while others may be subjected to a more comprehensive review by the General Council. For example, a certain review of specific portions of anti-dumping regulations might help to resolve the prevailing suspicion on the conspicuous proliferation of the anti-dumping measures.

Admittedly, politically, agriculture will always remain a hard nut to crack in any trade round. But this time around we have to realize that further liberalization of trade in agriculture is a continuing process, to be picked up from where we have left off at the close of the Uruguay Round. We are more than profoundly acquainted with the differences in our positions. But all would agree that **this fundamentally important sector must be subjected to a thorough reform** throughout the world. Our priority is to facilitate this reform by **committing ourselves to continuing negotiations with the full recognition of the complexities and diversities of this primary sector.** Again I would like to suggest that special attention be given to the interests of agriculture-based developing countries and that other concerns be addressed in a manner that is not trade restrictive and distorting.

As we are looking forward to a new round which should be comprehensive and broad-based, advanced countries should have no fear that their interests and social concerns shall not be adequately dealt with. I would make the same plea to developing countries to be equally mindful of these legitimate concerns. But I would venture to advise that we should avoid trade sanctioning as a means to promote some of these concerns as it may result in greater impoverishment and therefore reducing the ability to upgrade the quality of life. However, subsidies that result in over production and environmental degradation should definitely be cut while positive trade-creating incentives should be offered to spur the upgrading process.

I realize that it is somewhat risky of me to utter a word about labor. But I would like to emphasize here that all of us, rich or poor, share the same dream, one that portrays the rightful treatment of labor by all of us concerned. Therefore I think that we should not shy away from the opportunity to set up a high level soul-searching dialogue on trade and labor. But this dialogue should be a one-off meeting with no binding commitment. It should be organized by neutral party such as the UNCTAD or the UN ECOSOC with participation by

representatives from the WTO and the ILO and decision makers from member countries. Whatever the outcome of the dialogue trade sanctioning should not be accepted as a means to promote the adoption of core labor standards.

In the hope that we can make further progress in rendering trade most conducive to development, I would like to plead for **flexibility**, compassion and courage in our deliberations that should lead to the launch of a successful Development Round.