

WORLD TRADE

important social and environmental functions, e.g. the preservation of the countryside and the rural environment, features of particular importance for a tourist country with many mountainous regions. Therefore non-trade concerns are of particular importance to us in the negotiations on agriculture.

The Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS) has been criticized for limiting policy options in relation to public health concerns. But we must not forget that intellectual property rights provide an essential stimulus for creativity and innovation. However, Austria is fully committed to finding solutions to the problem of access to affordable medicines.

In the interest of achieving a sustainable development, complementarity of trade and environmental policy is important. The WTO Committee on Trade and Environment has contributed to a better understanding of the relevant questions and positions. We therefore feel that a good basis has been laid for moving the discussion to a new phase, in which we could proceed to clarify concretely the compatibility of multilateral environmental agreements with the existing WTO rules. In this context we also should address the issue of the precautionary principle and see to it that there are adequate rules on labelling to meet the evident needs of consumers for information. We are convinced that WTO has to assure policy makers and the population that trade and environment are mutually supportive. Consequently, WTO has to take appropriate measures to this effect by clarifying its rules, taking on the legitimate concerns of all WTO Members, in particular of developing countries, and thus reducing the risk of protectionist abuse of environmental objectives.

We fully support the ILO's work in promoting the compliance with core labour standards in all countries and in particular the recent initiative by Mr Somavia. Indeed, this is an area where cooperation must be intensified by creating an institutional dialogue between all relevant organizations like ILO, WTO, UNCTAD, IMF, etc. We reaffirm that comparative advantages of developing countries should not be called into question and that we stand against trade sanctions and protectionist measures in this context.

The WTO is in an ideal position to intensify the work on trade and investment and on trade and competition which would complement its relevance in all matters related to international trade. The analytical studies carried out for half a decade by the respective Working Groups have achieved already valuable insights. Therefore we assume that sufficient preparation has been conducted and time is ripe now to launch negotiations. The introduction of basic rules in both areas will be likely to benefit developing countries at least as much as industrialized members, be it in terms of attracting investment or creating a competitive environment.

This Ministerial Conference provides the opportunity for the 142 Member countries of the WTO to welcome 1.5 billion people from China and Chinese Taipei into our rules-based system. China's accession to WTO represents a major step towards universal acceptance of rules for international trade. The rules-based system will play a crucial role in furthering global economic cooperation and will contribute to sustainable growth and economic development, peace and stability world-wide. In addition, intensifying accession negotiations with the other applicant countries, amongst them larger nations like Russia, the Ukraine and Saudi Arabia, and with smaller ones like Nepal or Bhutan to name just a few, will further strengthen the system.

Mr Chairman, since its creation the WTO has increased its importance as an international organization and in civil society's opinion. Thus, it is up to us to once again show leadership and launch a comprehensive round of trade negotiations. We owe it to our people that we take their legitimate concerns seriously and address them in an appropriate manner. This will enhance WTO's standing and reputation and will permit it to carry out its tasks even more successfully.
