

# WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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## SLOVENIA

Statement by H.E. Mrs Tea Petrin  
Minister of Economy

It is to my Government's satisfaction that this 4<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference is taking place here in Doha in spite of tragic events of two month ago – thus confirming our willingness to react against disruptive violence and confirming the determination of the international community to advance multilateral cooperation. For this and the hospitality that has been extended, I thank H.H. the Emir of Qatar and the people of the State of Qatar.

I would also like to pay special tribute to the Chairman of the General Council, Mr Stewart Harbinson, the Director-General, Mr Mike Moore, and the staff of the Secretariat of the WTO, for the great effort put into preparations for this Conference and to propose the draft texts as a good basis for deliberations that are now taking place.

At the very beginning let me convey my Government's great satisfaction that China successfully concluded negotiations on its terms of membership in the World Trade Organization, after a long period of talks. We also welcome Chinese Taipei as a new member. I am sure that they will play an important role in the organization and contribute to its universality.

We are meeting at an extraordinary time. The present, and a shared vision of the future, underscore very strongly the need for this Conference to succeed. The general trend of an economic slowdown in the world is a reality that we are faced with. The current negative trends should be reversed as soon as possible, by all means, and the confidence in the multilateral process restored.

Therefore, I hope that we will be able to launch, in Doha, a new comprehensive and substantive Work Programme, leading to negotiations of key issues of world trade. A new round of negotiations is critical in the present situation in order to maintain the momentum of a rules-based trading system and credibility of the WTO.

This Conference is in fact an opportunity that we the Ministers have to decide on an agenda of work in the WTO well into the future; through that we can contribute to the stability of world trade. It is an opportunity to ensure the increased involvement of the developing countries in the multilateral trading system and that the system will respond more fully to the needs of all Members. The Conference will no doubt expose the institutional issues that the WTO faces today. With more countries coming in, the question of efficiency will become an issue of prime importance. I hope that the Members, in this Conference, will understand the critical importance of starting a new process of talks, so that, within that process, the concerns and issues of trade can be exposed and solutions can be hammered out. Without the will to establish such an open process no progress can be expected and no results and benefits can be achieved.

If we wish, indeed, to launch a new comprehensive work programme and negotiations, there should be no preconditions attached to it or the results shouldn't be predetermined. Expectations should be realistic and pragmatic. A successful launch of negotiations will be the starting-point for detailed discussions on all the key issues and concerns. Therefore, after the relevant decisions will be made, further coordinations will be necessary and issues should be discussed and agreed on *in the process of negotiations*. Slovenia can only accept a broad enough agenda of talk and a balanced outcome.

Allow me to reflect further on more specific points and underscore some of the priorities of my Government, although they have been presented in Geneva.

The separate draft declaration on access to medicines and on issues of public health is an important document and statement. We welcome its endorsement at this Conference. Although the fundamental principles of the TRIPS Agreement remain unaffected, the Declaration is a statement that recognizes the need for responsibility and flexibility on social and health objectives under extraordinary circumstances. This allows the TRIPS Agreement to become a part of national and international action to address problems of public health in developing countries that are in dire need of better access to medicines. Slovenia is in favour of a more flexible approach, although, the basic principles of the TRIPS Agreement shouldn't be undermined.

The main benefits of a small but open economy, depending on international trade, are in the area of rule-making and giving strength and clarity to existing rules. This also involves the so called Singapore issues: investment competition policy, trade facilitation, government procurement.

Since the WTO, so far, has not effectively contributed to sustainable development, it is important to continue the process of clarification of the relationship between WTO rules and the Multilateral Environment Agreement (MEAs), to adopt guidelines on the use of precaution and to clarify food-safety issues and the use of eco-labelling. Consumer welfare and consumer policies are also a trade-related concern.

In the context of comprehensive negotiations on agriculture, as a part of a single undertaking, must address the questions on non-trade concerns. This is not an obscure concept or an afterthought to other issues. This is an area of vital importance to Slovenia as a small agricultural producer. Slovenia would find it very difficult to accept further negotiations on agriculture without them balancing them with outcomes of negotiations in other areas.