

# WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

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## MALAYSIA

Statement by the Honourable Dato' Seri Rafidah Aziz  
Minister of International Trade and Industry

Firstly, I would like to congratulate Cambodia, a fellow ASEAN Member, and Nepal, as they will be admitted into the WTO Membership later today. Their accession is especially meaningful, as it marks the entry of the first two Least-Developed Countries into the WTO since 1995. I am confident that they will actively contribute towards improving the multilateral trading system.

Malaysia also looks forward to the early accession of other ASEAN Members, Laos and Vietnam, into the WTO.

The Doha Development Agenda has generated much interest amongst the trading nations of the world, in the hope that, the expansion of trade, can contribute directly towards economic and social development.

The Ezulwini Statement issued in Swaziland, by the Smart Partnership Movement, comprising 14 WTO Members, on 15 August 2003, reiterated their belief in the role of the WTO, in

On non-agriculture market access, Malaysia is supportive of a non-linear approach, but any formula to be agreed upon, must accommodate the developmental needs of developing countries, which are already liberal, but, may have high tariffs, in selected strategic industries. It is also Malaysia's position, that export taxes and restrictions, are not a part of the current negotiations.

Malaysia cannot accept any proposal for a sectoral approach, in respect of market access, for non-agricultural products, particularly if it involves the mandatory participation by all. If at all, the sectoral approach is adopted, participation by developing countries shall be on a voluntary basis.

On services, Malaysia subscribes to the WTO principle of progressive liberalization, and will

Undoubtedly, improved multilateral rules and greater market liberalization, would indeed contribute towards the expansion of world trade, which can have positive spin-offs among the trading nations.

But there are costs involved. No country can be expected to subscribe to universally applicable multilateral rules in trade, if the costs are onerous, and if they lose sovereign rights to determine policy measures, which have direct impact upon their developmental goals and objectives.

In his opening remarks, Secretary Derbez alluded to the hope of achieving an ambitious package of decisions in Cancún. The problem that has been faced by the WTO, since Doha, is the expectation of that ambitious outcome.

Within the diversity of the WTO Membership, there are differing levels and scope of ambition. Some Members are extremely ambitious, anticipating everything to be in one single undertaking. Others can only have limited ambition, being unable to meet onerous obligations for further concessions.

In Cancún, it is important that we work towards extracting, from those different levels and scope of ambition, realistic common denominators, and to have pragmatic decisions, which lend themselves to the required consensus, and therefore, enable this Cancún Ministerial Meeting to be a success.

It is important that this Ministerial in Cancún not be evaluated simply as either being a success or a failure. Cancun is not supposed to be, and should not be, an "either-or" situation. We have various options open to us, to enable the Meeting to come up with a Statement or a Text which can give clear guidance on the future work beyond Cancún. The Meeting should not be trivialized by any "all-or-nothing" hardline positions.

We must have the wisdom to extract, from the menu of issues, those which can expeditiously lend themselves to consensus. We should be brave and pragmatic enough to defer, till later, issues on which a consensus cannot, as of now, be attained.

We must not take on more than we can accommodate, but rather, we need to ensure, through judicious management of the varied positions and standpoints, issues which can quickly be negotiated upon for agreement, and come up with Ministerial directives on what work needs to be done after Cancún.

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