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CROATIA

Statement by H.E. Mr Ljubo Jur i
Minister of Economy

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, let me begin by thanking the Mexican Government for the warm hospitality and excellent organization of this Conference in the beautiful setting of Cancún.

Almost two years ago in Doha, we agreed on launching a new round of multilateral trade negotiations with a hope that it will bring benefits and contribute to the growth of our respective economies and increase the standard of living for our people. Being a small and open economy with large market access opening already undertaken upon its WTO accession, Croatia supported the new Round.

Since the beginning of the new Round, there has been some progress in negotiations, however, there is still a long way to go. Concerning the preparatory process for Cancún, the procedure used by the Chairman of the General Council and the Director-General appears to be the only possibility at this stage. We can go along with the format of the Draft Ministerial Text being used as a basis for further work and negotiations in this Conference. On the substance, we still have concerns and difficulties in some key areas.

Let me first welcome the adoption of the Decision on the implementation of paragraph 6 of the Doha Ministerial Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health. This is a significant

Let me recall the proposal on agriculture made by a group of recently acceded Members from August 2003 (document JOB/(03)/170) on the necessity to include specific flexibility provisions related to their future commitments in any Cancún agreement. On market access, such provisions would exempt low duties from further reduction commitments, provide for lower tariff reductions, longer implementation period for new commitments and a grace period before the implementation of new commitments.

Moreover, any solution agreed for a special safeguards instrument should be accordingly applicable to recently acceded Members. Otherwise only seven or eight WTO Members would not have recourse to any such safeguard instrument. Flexibility provisions for recently acceded Members